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Tracing the origins of the first Christian community in Europe

**MACEDONIAN AUTOCEPHALOUS APOSTOLIC
CHURCH**



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The intention of this essay is to provide simple and easy to understand overview of periods from Macedonian Christian history and culture. It avoids substantial and detailed explanations that consider wider historical background of the described events and persons, and is written primarily for those approaching the topic for the first time. It also avoids complex explanatory comments or insightful footnotes on the citations from the sources. The given explanatory notes are prevalently etymological.

The introduction comprises the periods from ancient history of Macedonia and presents a brief overall retrospective of advent of Christianity in Macedonia. The time-frame elaborated as a main theme of this essay ranges from the beginning of the 1st century AD until today. The interpretations given here are meant to enhance our understanding and appreciation of the first Christendom in Europe. They are focused strictly on the Macedonian aspect of the story disregarding the wider geo-political perspective.

All the dates and references to centuries are „AD“ (lat. *Anno Domini* - used to indicate our era after the commonly accepted date of Christ's birth) except where indicated otherwise. Throughout this essay, Macedonia/Macedonians generally refer to the area of the mainland north of Mount Olym (lat. *Olympus*), southeast of the Mount Šar (lat. *Scardus*) and west of the Rhodope Mountains. Macedonian peninsula refers to what is called „*Balkans*“ as of the 19th century, occupying the part of southeastern Europe that lies south of the Danube and Sava rivers and forms a peninsula bounded by the Adriatic and Ionian seas in the west, the Aegean and Black seas in the east, and the Mediterranean Sea in the south.

Latinized/Anglicized or Macedonic names are given in parenthesis, some names and technical terms are transliterated and these will be obvious when they appear. Other technical terms and titles (e.g. *Nova Roma*, *Iraklea*, etc.) have been transliterated directly from their original forms with as few changes as possible: thus *Iraklea* rather than ‘*Heraclea*’, and *droungarios* rather than ‘*droungarios*’, which is neither “*Greek*” nor Latin.

The terminology and concepts that are modern inventions (such as ‘*Hellenistic*’ or ‘*Greek*’) are altogether avoided. Such empirically wrong terms, used improperly by the modern historiography, were originally meant to describe totally different categories (such as the artistic periods) and were unknown to the ancient world. Their continued use perpetuates misleading assumptions.

The modern-historiography ‘privileged moments’ are largely avoided too. For example - for historians today one such a privileged moment (of places and monuments as ‘*clasical*’) is ‘*Clasical Athens*’, the Athens of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. But when and why is so regarded? Was ‘*Clasical Athens*’ regarded as “*Clasical*” already in antiquity? By whom?

The definitions, current meanings and related concepts of the words in English are taken from the Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus (Mac OsX version 1.0.2 for PowerPC) and/or Meriam-Webster online dictionary. For the transliterated words in Macedonian is used the online ENCYCLOPÆDIA MACEDONICA (MAKEDONSKA ENCIKLOPEDIJA) vol. 1 & 2, and online Macedonian dictionaries (idividi.com, off.net, etc.).

The sources that were used are listed in the References at the end of this essay.

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Tracing the origins of the First European Christian Community - Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church

Macedonians, the renown conquerors of the ancient world, are not distinguished only because of Alexander the Great and the empire larger even than that of the Romans, nor only because they are the eldest and maybe the only old nation of Europe that still preserved its original name as from 2450 BCE. They are also distinguished as the very first nation on the European continent that have invoked and accepted the Christian religion at the very dawn of this era. Lidia, a young Macedonian woman from Philippi in Macedonia, was the first-ever baptized Christian on the European soil. In the Macedonian Jerusalem, Ohrid, was founded the first ever known Christian church (St. Erasmo) on European soil in the 3rd century AD, and is the ultimate Holy See of the old Patriarchate/Archiepiscopacy of Ohrid. There is also the honorable platea of the first known university in Europe - St. Clement's University on Plaošnik.



Above: the administrative division of the Roman provinces in Macedonian peninsula. Despite the continuous changing and renaming of different areas on several occasions, throughout

the centuries they remained generally in the same boundaries as administrative regions under Romeian, and later under Turkish rule, until the 19th century and creation of the new nation-states. Nevertheless, Macedonia and Macedonian people remained the only nation in Europe that preserved their original ancient ethnic identity and name, unchanged for more than 2400 years

Macedonian Apostolic Church by succession is one of the four Ancestral Apostolic churches.¹ For having a more clear idea of the geopolitical divisions in this part of the continent, with which this discourse on the initial Christianization of Europe is dealing - the then Diocese Macedonia under Roman occupation was made up of the following administrative provinces: Macedonia Prima, Macedonia Secunda, Epirus Nova, Epirus Vetus, Thessaly, Achaia, and isle of Crete. Most of these were situated within the historical boundaries of the geographic Macedonia, once part of the ancient Macedonian empire, and subsequently a Roman province officially after 148 BCE.

Below: map of the ecclesiastic division of Roman provinces in the Macedonian peninsula on Dioceses in the 6th century (AD 535).



¹ In explaining the official position of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the primacy of Christian Churches in Eastern and Western parishes, Roman Pope Nicholas I (858-867) in the distant 859 said: "Roman curia for true churches considers only those which were established by apostles, such as the - Macedonian, Roman, Antiochian and Aleksandrian church. Although the church clerics of Constantinople and Jerusalem call themselves 'patriarchs', however, that's without meaning, because they are not regulated by the apostles."

After the division of Roman empire in Eastern and Western parts in AD 286, and effectively in AD 395, Macedonia became a proper of the Eastern-Romeian Empire, until the Turkish invasion in the 14th century. Nevertheless, even then it preserved its geographic, ethnic and ecclesiastic entirety. Thenafter in the 19th century it was divided and further reduced under the occupation of modern neocolonial/political subdivision (WW1 and WW2) to the present-day Republic of Macedonia.



Above: **Macedonia in its historical geographic borders, divided with the Balkan Wars (1912-1913)**

Thus, already in the first century AD, when Macedonia was still a province under Roman occupation, the people that today are under jurisdiction of the modern Macedonian Rightglorified² Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy³, invoked and accepted the teachings of Apostle Paul, one of the first major Christian missionaries and theologians. The Apostle was born in the year of the world 3998, or about two years

² “Pravoslavna” in plain Macedonian, from “Pravo”- rightful, and “Slavna”- glorified/celebrated (by glory of Jesus); i.e. “*Orthodox (church)*” in the western-Europe modern nomenclature.

³ *Makedonska Pravoslavna Crkva - Ohridska Arhiepiskopija* in transliterated plain Macedonian, abbr. MPC-OA; a Christian Church descended from the ancient Macedonic Christian religion and official national church of today Macedonia. Like the other Orthodox Churches MPC-OA does not recognize the authority of the Roman pope and uses its own elaborate and ancient forms of holy service. The chief Orthodox Churches (often known collectively as the *Eastern Orthodox Church* in western Europe) beside Macedonian include the national churches of: Albania, Bulgaria, Grease, Moldavia, Montenegro, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, White Russia (i.e. Belarus), etc. The term “Orthodox” is also used for other ancient churches, mainly of African or Asian origin, e.g., the Coptic, Syrian, and Ethiopian churches.

before the advent of our Lord. He was a far-famed Doctor of the Law, a person of great wisdom, a man of authority and eminence. Around Macedonia also preaches the Apostle Andrew, who sets apostle Urban for first episcope in Macedonia.



Above: **St. Apostle Paul**

Paul took this most important step of carrying over the doctrine of the Gospel from Troas to Macedonia in AD 51-54, and from thence spreading it further in the countries across the rest of Europe. He made three missionary voyages in Macedonia. His voyages in Philippi, Ber (Lat. *Beroia*), Solun, and other places in

Macedonia are widely known. Nonetheless, archaeological and other evidences show that beside these three cities in the first century AD in Macedonia were formed many other early Christian communities - in Amfipolion (Lat. *Amphipolis*), Bargala, Iraklea Linkesta (Lat. *Heraclea Lynkestis*, today Bitola), Lihnid (Lat. *Lychnidos*; today Ohrid), Skopje (Lat. *Scopis*), Stob(i), Tiveriopole (Lat. *Tiberiopolis*), etc. It is quite in the spirit of Macedonic antiquity (a spirit which was by no means familiar to the author of the Acts of the Apostles) that so important an era, including so much of the future history of the cause of the Gospel, should be inaugurated by a vision that came in Apostle Paul's vision. In this vision a Macedonian man appeared to the Apostle Paul with a prayer that he should go over to Macedonia and help them (XVI.9).

At the time this happened Paul was at Troas, the capital city of a small country of the same name, situated to the west of Mysia (in Asia Minor), and on the borders of the Hellespont. This city, built by Lisimach (Lat. *Lysimachus*), one of Alexander's famed chelniks⁴, was peopled from the neighboring Macedonic places, and originally called Alexandria, or *Troas Alexandri*, by the builder, in honor of his great leader. But, it soon lost its more distinguished Macedonic name, and with the surrounding country retained that of *Troas* merely, and in the Apostles days it was a noted sea-port, where travelers from the upper parts of Asia usually embarked for Thrace and Macedonia.



While remaining there, apparently in a state of uncertainty as to his future movements, Apostle Paul beheld in the night time a vision, which at once determined him as to the course he should pursue. A Macedonian man stood before him, and besought him to pass into Macedonia to their assistance. Literarily

⁴ “Chelnik” - chieftain, general; a ‘military leader’ in plain Macedonian.

as written in the Bible: ...a Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" (Acts of the Apostles 16.9)

Paul immediately related the importance of the vision to Luke, Silas, and Timothy, who, with one accord, regarding it as a direction from heaven, willingly obeyed the requisition, and setting out from Troas, came with a fair wind directly to the legendary Samothrace. St. Paul, however, did not even land on the island, but, passing by, landed at Neapolis. Nonetheless, he and his companions didn't stop there. They next proceeded to Philippi. It lay about fifteen miles distant from Neapolis, and was the chief city of that part of Macedonia. The bibles also testify that Macedonia is the country where the first ever Christian on the European soil - a woman named Lidia from Philippi, was baptized first and converted to Christianity.



The occurrences which are said to have taken place during the first Apostle's visit to Philippi, in Macedonia, belong to the most miraculous order of those which the Acts of the Apostles relates of him. Whilst Paul and Silas, it is stated, were spending some days in Philippi, they were followed, whenever they took their way outside the city, by a young woman possessed with a spirit of divination, with the loud

cry, "*These men are the servants of the Most High God, who show us the way of salvation.*" After the damsel had followed them for many days, Paul converted and blessed her in the name of Jesus Christ.

For prophesying the new teachings of Christianity the two Apostles were soon thrown by the Roman occupying authorities into the deepest prison, and held in the strictest confinement. But, as the Acts of the Apostles tell us further - at midnight Paul and Silas raised a loud hymn to god, heard by all the prisoners, which was followed immediately by a powerful earthquake, that caused the doors of the prison to be thrown open and the fetters of the prisoners to be loosed. At the sight of the open doors the jailer thought that the prisoners had escaped. But when Paul called out to him with a loud voice that they were all there, and he, falling at the feet of Paul and Silas, asked, "*What must I do to be saved?*" The answer was, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Further, Apostle Paul passed through Amphipolion and Apollonia, as the missionary journey lead him to Peloponnesus. Amphipolion was built about five hundred years before the Christian era. It was the capital of the first division of Macedonia, situated on the banks of the river Strumon (Lat. *Strymon*, today river Struma), and contained about ten thousand inhabitants. Apollonia was also a city of Macedonia, betwixt Amphipolion and Solun, and, although not of so much consequence as the former in any point of view, had yet sufficient importance to attract the Apostle's attention.

After that he returned to Asia Minor and stayed for sometime in Ephesus, and after visiting Jerusalem once again, Apostle Paul returned back in Macedonia. In this second journey, his deputies, together with Titus, Jason, and Luke, the sacred historian, who had now rejoined him, accompanied the Apostle into Macedonia, at one of the cities of which the deputies separated from the remainder of the company, and proceeded forward to Troas to await their coming.

Even if there's no detailed historical records for his second voyage road itinerary, it must be assumed that St. Paul on his way to Matia and Dalmatia, must've passed somewhere through the western parts of Macedonia, otherwise he should've fly over, which for those times is very unlikely. So, undeniably he also passed through ancient Macedonian cities of Iraklea Linkesta and Lihnid (i.e. *Ohrid*). This was the route of *Via Egnatia*, the ancient Roman road, laid upon the track of even more ancient Macedonian road built by great kings of Ancient Macedon. He visited again Philippi, Solun, Ber, and other places at which he had formerly established churches, teaching and exhorting the disciples to remain steadfast in the faith, and to look forward with the full assurance of receiving the glorious reward that would ultimately be theirs. Having thus, as far as lay in his power, discharged his duty to the absent churches, the Apostle proceeded through the remainder of Macedonia on his errand of charity, and even prolonged his preaching into Matia and Dalmatia, an extensive provinces to the northwest of Macedonia.

St. Paul, with Titus, Jason, and Luke, after tarrying a short time longer in Macedonia, and celebrating the feast of the passover at Philippi, sailed from thence by Neapolis, and after a voyage of five days rejoined the deputies back at Troas, having occupied about ten months in this mission, from the time he left Ephesus till its conclusion.

The third voyage of St. Paul to Macedonia happened to be after long journey to Rome, where he was taken as a prisoner. In this voyage Luke, the sacred historian, and Aristarch, the Macedonian, accompanied him. Two years after he was freed, but then he went to Spain, and thenafter by crossing through France he arrived as far as Britain, which at that period was Roman colony too. After the lapse of nine months passed in Spain, France, and Britain Paul embarked on shipboard, and proceeded by sea to Crete, a voyage as long and as perilous as any he had ever undertaken. Then he returned once again to Judea and Jerusalem from where he went back to Macedonia for third and last time. Apostle remained at Nicopolis till the winter had passed away, after which he resumed his labors, and passed through the greater part of

Macedonia. He then embarked at Cenchrea, and, crossing the Aegean Sea, landed once more at Troas, from which, after a short stay in that city, he proceeded to visit Timothy at Ephesus.

During his long journey in the western Europe the Apostle undoubtedly suffered many of those persecutions and afflictions which awaited him wherever he went, and which were so admirably calculated to prepare him for the now fast-approaching termination of his earthly avatar. It is supposed that at Ephesus he received a divine intimation that his labors were nearly at an end, his sufferings drawing to a close, and that he must, ere long, gain the crown of martyrdom at Rome. He bade farewell to Timothy, his most dear and valued friend, and then, with characteristic firmness, set his face towards Rome. And although now bending under the weight of years, journeyed with a light heart to meet his impending fate. The manner in which his last journey was accomplished is involved in obscurity. Some think that the Apostle passed through Macedonia, again visiting the churches he had planted there, and, crossing the Adriatic Sea into Italy, proceeded by land to Rome. Others are of opinion that he embarked at Ephesus, and went to Italy directly by sea. This is more probable.



St. Paul arrived at Rome for the second and last time soon after the commencement of the first general persecution of the Christians in the reign of the tyrant Neron. The Apostle was pointed out to this instrument of tyranny and oppression as the principal leader of the obnoxious sect, and instant imprisonment was his lot. The crown he panted for, he soon obtained. The evil-minded hatred for Christianity returned to Rome. Paul was taken from prison, and with but little form of trial, condemned to death; the only privilege accorded to him being that, as a Roman citizen, he should suffer by the sword.

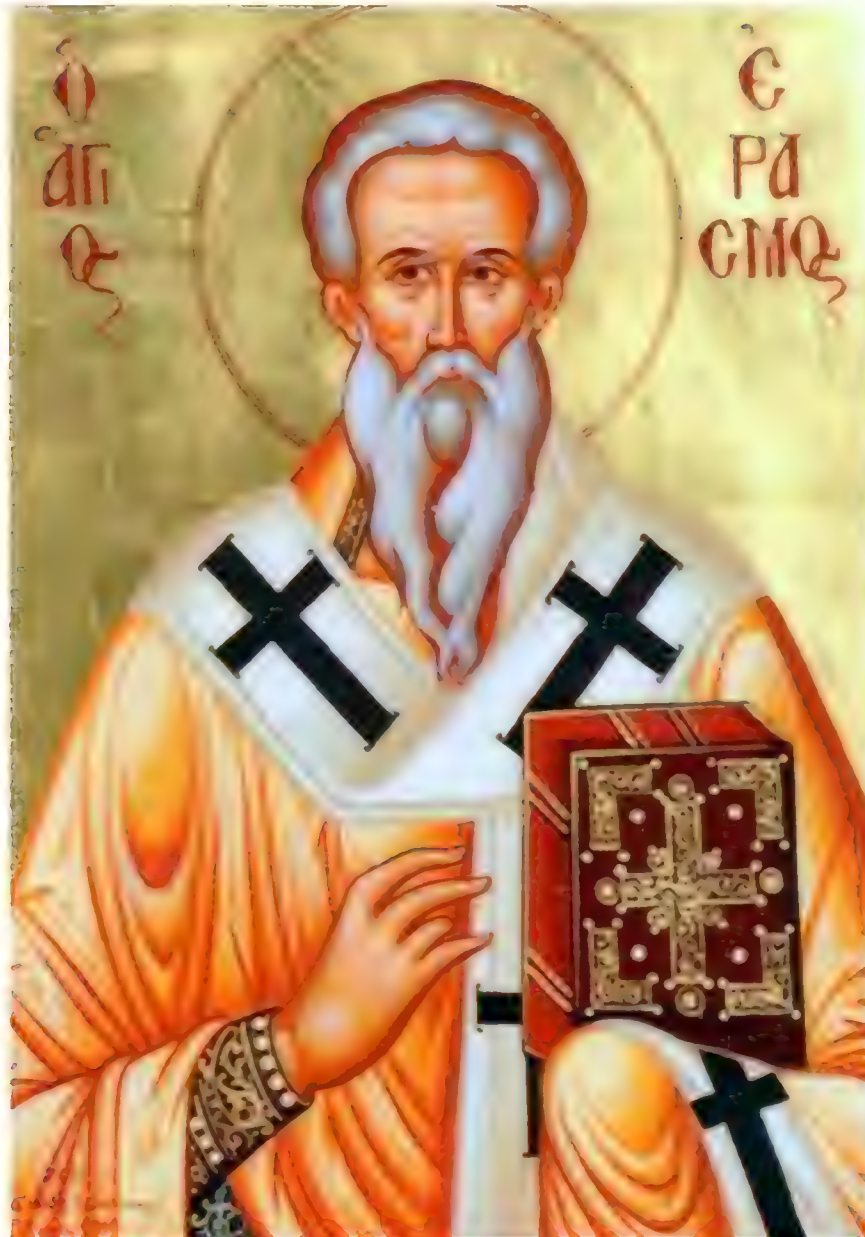
Christian belief brought by St. Paul in Macedonia found wide popular acceptance and firm stronghold there since the apostolic times in first place because of Christianity role as opposition movement to the Roman yoke. Macedonians, notorious for their constant rebellions and never ending struggle for freedom, found new hope in Jesus and monotheism.

Facing the widespread popular acceptance of the new religion, the pagan Roman occupators, starting from the time of Neron (AD 54-68) channeled their desperate practices of oppression and tyranny toward the Christians with cruel inquisition-styled pogroms. The storm of persecution having thus commenced, it arose, ere long, to the height of an ungovernable tempest, which soon dispersed further the ill-fated Christians of Macedonia. From this wretched barbaric period of the human history remained the proverbial saying of "throwing to the lions", hence the Christians were really thrown to the lions for public amusement in Roman circuses.



"Their name is coming from Christus, who was executed in the time of Tiberius by one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate; and this very dangerous heresy, even if halted for a moment, not only reappeared again in Judea, where was the source of this evil, but in Rome too, where all disgusting and shameful things find recovery and popularity... The killed (Christians) ones are laughed publicly, they were raged and thrown

to the dogs, or crucified and put on fire like the torches in the night...”⁵ Almost absolute absence of Christian temples from these first centuries of Christ Era testifies the ruthless persecutions by Romans toward any manifestation and symbol of Christianity. Thenafter, despite the incessant bloody oppression and inhuman treatment, near the Macedonian Jerusalem, Ohrid, in the 3rd century AD was founded and built the first ever officially known Christian abbey/church on European soil - the church of St. Erasmo (Lat. *Erasmus*), of which the ancient remains were recently discovered. With this small church in the 3rd century were laid the foundations of the nearby future ultimate institution and autocephalous Holy See of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.



Above: **an ikon of St. Erasmo**

⁵ Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales* 15, 44, ed. Charles Dennis Fisher (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906)

The last desperate Roman emperor that tried to bring back the old pagan beliefs was Flavius Claudius Julius. During his reign of terror in Macedonia were slaughtered the 15 Tiberiopolis Martyrs (Sv. 15 Tiveriopolski Mačenići). Their martyrdom cult and worship spread across Macedonia and abroad, and is celebrated by Christians in Macedonia until today.

In AD 295, the reforms of Diocletian (284-305) had seen Macedonia assigned under Diocese Moesia, one of the twelve newly established Dioceses of the Roman empire. From the until-then one and unique Province of Macedonia three administrative provinces were carved: Macedonia, Thessalia and Epirus Nova. Soonafter the dioceses became 14, as Diocese Moesia was again divided in two - Diocese Dacia and Diocese Macedonia. And the Provinces of Macedonia, Thessalia and Epirus Nova were reassigned again under the Diocese Macedonia. Then emperor Valentian II (364-375) created the province of *Macedonia Salutaris* that comprised Macedonia and Dacia, and so on...



Above: illustration from 'Cosmographia Scoti, Notitia dignitatum'. Etc. folio no. 090v
Basel, 1436

The centennial Roman terror against the Macedonians in the occupied Macedonian territories continued with the same barbaric obduracy, but now focused especially on the Christian Macedonians. This terror lasted until AD 313, when the oppression against Christians was finally halted by the emperor Konstantin I the Great. He recognized and permitted the practicing of Christianity as one of the religions in the Roman empire. On top of that in AD 330 the capital of the empire was transferred by Konstantin into his newly built city on Bosphorus, Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma (Latin: *Constantinopolitana Nova Roma*, anglicized: *Constantinople*). No one in the old world expected such a striking event and switch of the balance that sent shock waves across the whole Mediterranean. This geopolitical earthquake gave the new impetus to the Macedonian Christian community, and particularly to the Macedonian church and its par excellence central position in Macedonian peninsula. Thus, the Christianity was finally legalized by emperor Konstantin I the Great in AD 324, and the church in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma became Ecumenical (i.e. Imperial) Patriarchate. Then, Roman inhuman policy of assimilating everyone and everything by sword and flame was now adopted by their very victims, i.e. the Christians, when they finally succeed in coming to power at the end of the Roman empire in the fourth century AD. In AD 380 due to its mass acceptance, Theodosius I even proclaimed it as the state religion. Then, already widely accepted Christianity, sprang out of illegality in Macedonia as well.



The astonishing move of the emperor Konstantin was strongly contested by the churches in Alexandria, Antioch and Rome. These self-admiring execrate churches simply didn't expect such an unpredictable development from this great monarch of Macedonic origin, as they were all aiming to become the

exclusive center(s) of the new universal credo. But, Konstantin I the Great blew away their blasphemous dreams of monopoly over Christianity.

Although, these intransigent events didn't change much the extremely complicated position of the newly established Diocese Macedonia, as the Macedonian Apostolic Church found itself in the middle between the hammer and anvil of the powerful spheres of interest of old Rome and New Rome i.e. *Constantinople*. Macedonia became the axis around which the ecclesiastic schisms of east and west will contort during the following centuries, and Macedonian Apostolic Church a contested Christendom in the middle between the other two, over which the Eastern and Western congregations will fight incessantly ever since. A dire example of how the other churches comported toward the Macedonian Apostolic Church is the AD 381 letter of the pope Damasi I (366-384) in which he calls on the episcopo of Solun, Acholiy, to "*stand firmly against the 'Macedonic heresy' (?)...*"⁶ Today, two millennia after, the Macedonian Apostolic Church is still largely opposed and in treacherous denial by most of the modern politically-biased and divided modern churches, which stubbornly try to excommunicate this most oldest of all European churches. Once strongly forbidden and unthinkable "church nationalism" become the rule when the power of the Ecumenical Patriarchate declined in the 13th century. Instead of god's love and brotherhood - immorality, politics, territorial and other "greater" interests prevailed over the initial pure Christian credo professed by god's disciple on earth, Jesus Christ.

After the legalization of Christianity on behalf of Konstantin I the Great, within the Diocese Macedonia many Macedonian cities were risen into Episcopal Sees, testimonies of which we have in the records of participants of the first holy synods of all churches: the metropolitan episcopo Dake (Lat. *Dacus*) from the Skopje episcopacy (Lat. *Episcopae Scopis*), and Budimir and Evagriy of Stob(i) episcopacy are noted in the records of the very First Ecumenical Holy Synod of all churches in Nicaea in AD 325.

From the testimony of Eusebius the Caesarian we also know that the episcopo from Macedonia indeed participated on the Holy Synod in the city of Tyre and on the inauguration of the Holy Temple built by Konstantin I the Great on the (supposed) tomb of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem in AD 335: "*The emperor made godsend laws and gave great tribute by ordering around the cave in which the savior was born a great and marvelous temple to be erected, deign of god. ... Bishops from all provinces participated the blessing of the church. ... Thus Jerusalem became the centre of many archiereyes from all the provinces and the whole city became a mess of many servants of god. Macedonians too sent an episcopo from their metropolis.*"⁷

As participants of the Holy Synod in Serdica in AD 343 are mentioned the episcopos: Aeci from Solun, Antigon from Bela (Lat. *Pella*, the ancient capital of Macedonia), Paregoriy of Skopis (today Skopje), Evagriy of Iraklea (today Bitola), Basus of Diocletianople, Porphyry of Phillipi, Paladiy of Dion, Gerontiy from Beroia, and Zoxim of Lihnid (i.e. Ohrid);⁸

Macedonian episcopos were present also on the Second Universal Holy Synod of all churches in Constantinople in AD 381; on the Ephesus Holy Synod in AD 449, where the episcopo Petko (Lat. *Quintil*) participated; on the important 4th Ecumenical Holy Synod in AD 451 in Chalcedon, Bitinia, where were noted the episcopos Dardany from Bargala and Nikola from Stob(i); etc. etc.

⁶ 'Damasi Papae ad Acholium et Alios Macedoniae episcopos,' *Epistola* V, 365-369 (PL 13); Damasi Papae ad Acholium Thessalonicensem episcopum, *Epistola* VI, 369-370 (PL 13); J. Baco.

⁷ "*De Vita Constantini*," by Eusebius from Caesarea IV, XLIII p. 25.

⁸ Mansi III, col. 38-39, 42-49.

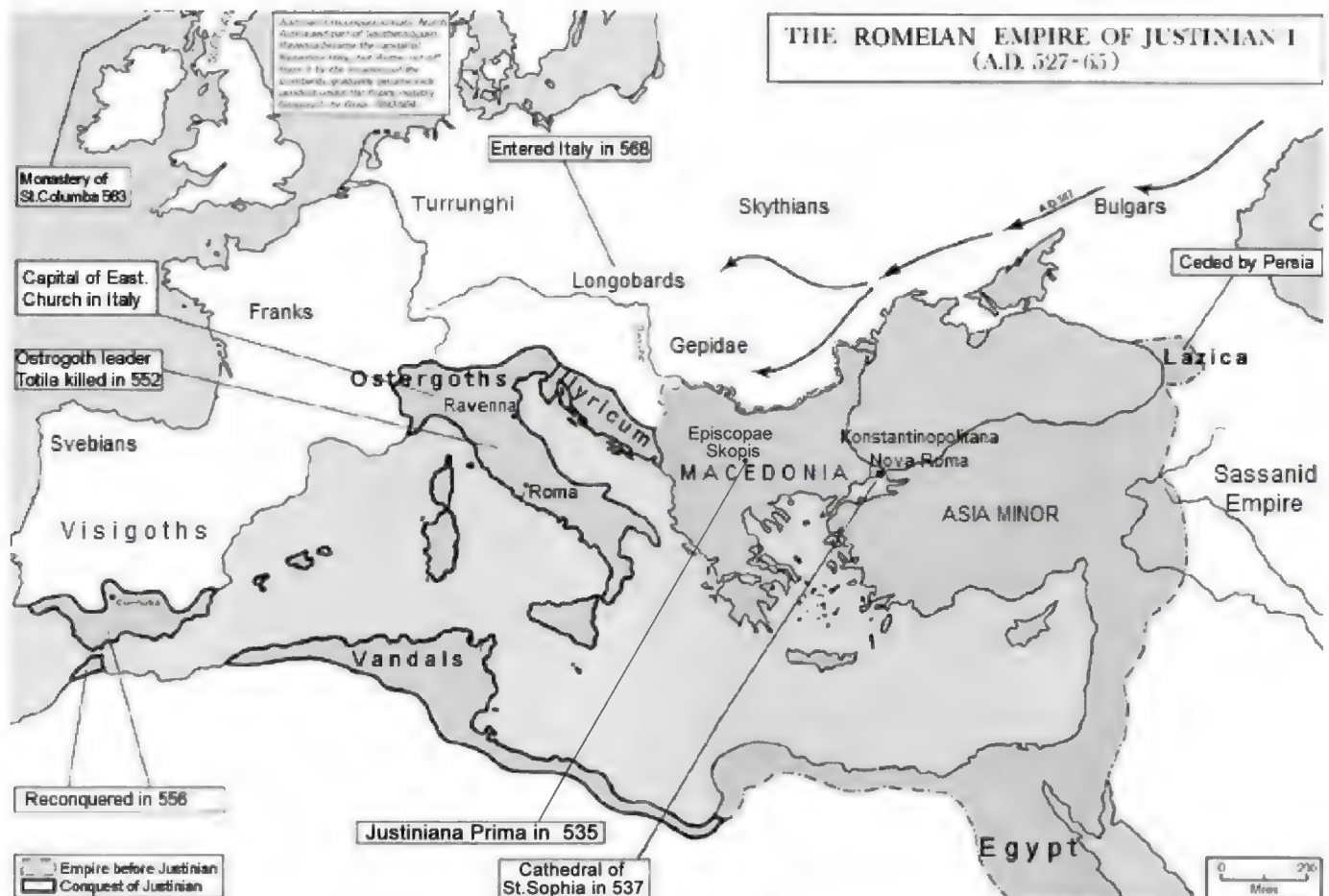
According to archaeological, epigraphic and other evidences from Macedonia, confirmed early Christian episcopacies in the IV century (when Christianity was officially recognized and legalized as religion) are: Apolonia, Dion, Lihnid (Lat. *Lychnidos*, today Ohrid), Partikopol, Amfipolion, Cassandrea, Serr(es), Arg(os), Iraklea Linkesta, Stob(i), Bargala⁹, Harmonia, Kalenidin, Zapara, Dober, Tiveriopol, Scopis (i.e. Justiniana Prima, today Skopje), etc.



⁹ Founded by St. Jerome (lat. *Hieronimus*) in the 4th century.

Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church of Justiniana Prima, the origins of ‘Christianimosity’

In AD 535 Macedonian Apostolic Church finally received the recognition of its indered dignities and God-given title, and was officially equaled by its apostolic right on the same level with the other apostolic and non-apostolic churches and holy sees in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Cyprus. The Romeian emperor Justinian I the Great then on 14 April 535 decreed in his Novel 11¹⁰ the elevated status of Episcopal city of Skopje (Lat. *Scopis*) into independent Autocephalous Apostolic Archiepiscopacy and Holy See of the Macedonian Church in the Diocese Macedonia, with his very own imperial title of “Justiniana Prima”.



The city of Skopis/Skopje was chosen for Holy See by him for three reasons. First, it was the nearest great metropolis and renown episcopacy in the vicinity of his natal village of Tauresium (today Taor); second, because of its central strategic position in the Macedonian peninsula, from where Justinian wanted to project his imperial power and ecumenical authority toward central and western Europe; and third but not the less important - because of the universal Macedonic linguistic spheres of influence. Namely, Skopje at that time was a melting pot between the East and West, and North and South, an important and cosmopolitan centre, as it is even today. Beside the universal Macedonic language(s) one could've hear

¹⁰ *De privilegiis archiepiscopi Primae Iustinianae.*

also corrupted Latin (i.e. Wallachian/Aromanian at its grassroots), Romeian 'Koine', Gaulic, 'Ladino', etc. Thus, the Justinian I intention was to firmly grasp and to reinforce under his ecumenical aegis this international junction and cosmopolitan hub, which Skopje always was, and use it as a religious and cultural bridge toward the freshly conquered western parts of his waste Romeian Empire. Under the jurisdiction of reaffirmed and independent autochthonous Macedonian Apostolic Church of Justiniana Prima the emperor Justinian I inserted the following provinces and regions: *Dacia Meditarranea*, *Dacia Ripensis*, *Moesia Secunda*, *Dardania*, *Praevalitana*, *Macedonia Secunda*, and a part of *Pannonia Secunda*. All these regions until then were under (in)direct church jurisdiction of Rome's papacy.¹¹ For the first archbishop was inaugurated the Skopje episcopo Katelian, then after him followed: Benenat of Skopje (Lat. *Benenatus Scupensis*) in AD 553, Paul, Jovan (Anglicized: *John*) I in AD 591-602, Leon, etc.¹² With this unprecedented move his powerful Christian state unhesitatingly reinvigorated the medieval continuity of the Ancient Macedonian civilization and reaffirmed its ancestral crucial position. Nonetheless, underlined the rule of that intensely Macedonic monarch Justinian I the Great.



Above: **the statue of Justinian I the Great in downtown of Skopje, today capital of Macedonia**

After the one of Konstantin I the Great, this was the second cardinal move that provoked huge turnover in the balance of divided churches in Europe - in favor of the Eastern Orthodox congregation, which now

¹¹ This Justinian' 6th century imperial decree, beside despoiling the larger part of Macedonian peninsula from the Rome's sphere of (ecclesiastic) influence, generated profound rupture and millennial animosity of the Roman Holy See toward everything Macedonian and Orthodox. Rome practically lost forever the previously conquered Macedonian territories. On top of that, this unprecedented destitution was executed by the hand of an emperor who himself was Macedonian by origin. This unforgiven and frozen Roman-Macedonic conflict lasts until today.

¹² "Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces Danubiennes de l'Empire Romain" by Jacques Zeiller, 1967.

held under its jurisdiction the whole eastern Mediterranean area and great part of central Europe. The most important point in the inauguration of Episcopal city of Skopje in Justiniana Prima was the regained independency of Macedonia from Rome. Thanks to Justinian I the Great Macedonia retrieved some of its

168 LIB. III. TAVOLA X. D'EUROPA			
<i>De gli Almopori.</i>			
Orma	Coria	45.45.	41.39
Europa		46.30.	41.20
Affala		46.20.	41. 6
<i>Di Orbelia</i>			
Garifo	Garifo	47.50.	41.40
<i>De gli Zordzi</i>			
Scampe	Oggi V'lagrada	45.45.	40.20
Diboma		45.45.	40.10
Daulia	Eladofegni	45.30.	40. 0
<i>De gli Efitri</i>			
Efitro		46.20.	40.50
Deboro	Refido	46.40.	40.45
Aloro	Diamro	47.15.	41.10
<i>De gli Ieri</i>			
Iero	Nenigrado	46.45.	41.15
<i>Di Sintice</i>			
Triffolo	Tamoriza	48. .	41.30
Parceopeli	<u>Scopia, capo di Macedonia</u>	58.40.	41.40
Eracta Sintica		49.30.	41.49
<i>Di Odomantici, detta Edomide.</i>			
Scotufa		49.30.	41.45
Berga	Bera secondo Stefano Beiza.	49.50.	41.40
Gafaro	Leflorocovi	50.15.	41.45
Anfipoli		50. .	41.30
Filippi		50.45.	41.45
<i>De' Delfartti</i>			
Enia	Moncastro	46.46.	40.15
Licudo. Locrida città sopra il Lago Locrida		46.50.	40.20
<i>Di Lincesie</i>			
Eractia	Xenarna	47.40.	40.40
<i>De' Pelagani</i>			
Andarifo	Veflerza	48. .	40.56
Stobn	Starabmo	48.30.	41.30
<i>Di Bifaltia</i>			
Arolo		49.10.	41.20
Esperia	Terina	49.20.	41.10
Callistore	Cidna	49.30.	41.10
Offa	Oliva	49.45.	41. 0
	Berta		

Above: **Scopis (Skopje), capital of Macedonia, "La Geografia" by Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1561**

buried for centuries and clouded by Roman occupation importance and splendor, and remained what it always was - the cradle of the European Civilization and virtually the primal source of Christianity in Europe, which is still to be found in this region in its very original form, as it was from the very beginning. On contrary to the complicated and alienated Anasthasian-reshuffled western Catholicism and Ecumenical Patriarchate in the east, that largely differed from the original Christian belief and teachings of Jesus Christ, in exchange for political power and bare profit.

However, the Justinian I decisive intervention blocked for time being the expansionist perspective of the alienated Roman-catholic church toward east, and sealed the almost exclusive "ownership" of Eastern Orthodox Church over the worshipers of the Eastern Europe and great Asian continent, in what will later became the great Russian Empire in the IX and X centuries. In fact, the Justinian's act provoked immediate but futile protest of the pope Agapit I (535-536). And after one decade of continuous protests from Roman papacy Justinian I finally reduced (?) some jurisdictions of Justiniana Prima, as mentioned in

his Novel 131¹³, published on 18 March 545. But, ironically enough he also lists and confirms again the same provinces that remained equally under jurisdiction of Justiniana Prima.

What this supposed “receding” meant? Well, nothing in particular. The emperor Justinian made this arbitrary move of false “rearranging” of the new Holy See in Skopje, to be seemingly put again under the competence of the Diocese of Rome, and the archbishop of Justiniana Prima was even promoted into a ‘papal vicar’... This shaggy “rearrangement” it came out effectively not at all to be what it looked like, and maybe was even deliberately made because of the consistent minority of already Latinized citizens (i.e. Vlachs) of the then Skopje. But, the clearly obvious and final intention of the emperor Justinian to eradicate the Roman church claws from Macedonian Peninsula was irrevocable. His design in achieving that was to unequivocally and at any cost obtain the full acceptance of his newly elevated autocephalous church in first place, even by apparently giving it back in management to those who already lost it, just to momentarily appease them in order to obtain their official and final resignation. Because, once founded imperial Justiniana Prima could not be undone. In his limitless imperial power Justinian I the Great was fully aware that this was just a confidence deception, and question of time, until this carrot-style subjugating of the Roman papacy finally succeeds. Let's not forget – during the rule of Justinian I the Great, Rome was in subordinate position, and the Eastern Roman Ecumenical power could've still be well projected to Italy long after his death. For example, in AD 663 the disobedient Pope Martin I (649-654) was arrested, brought to Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma for trial, judged, and exiled to Crimea. Imperial basilicas with eastern styled baptisteries were built by Justinian I in Savonna, Ravenna, and as far as Tharros in Sardinia, and Eastern Roman Empire ruled from Constantinople the entire Mediterranean and Asia Minor. A related issue is that the majority of churches in the Diocese of Macedonia, with a few exceptions earlier and later, were built between AD 460 and the middle of the 6th century.¹⁴ On the great Church Synod in AD 535 the presiding bishop stated that “*There is nothing on this earth that can be done without the will and order of the emperor.*” And accordingly, already the pope Vigilius was forced to give his full agreement and benediction for the third great Holy See in Skopje. This papal about-face prompted a Holy Synod in North Africa to excommunicate Vigilius, for the bishops of Milan and Aquileia to break communion with Rome, and for disappointing criticisms to be issued by the bishops of Gaul.

Thus, the Justiniana Prima was inaugurated “in perpetuum”¹⁵ as the third in rank official Autocephalous Apostolic Church. Its elevated status and privileges were definitely confirmed on the Fifth Ecumenical Holy Synod of the Church, where in AD 553 the instauration of Justiniana Prima was institutionally proclaimed and affirmed by the highest church instances. The (territorial) loss for Roman papacy was final and irrevocable - Macedonian peninsula and in particular Macedonia after 7 centuries of Roman occupation returned absolutely free from any kind of Roman domination. As of then the Roman (later renamed “*Catholic*”) church will become the main enemy of the Eastern Orthodox Church(es), in a frozen religious conflict (Christianimosity) that lasts incessantly for almost 15 centuries (1500 years).

¹³ *De ecclesiasticis canonibus et privilegiis.*

¹⁴ „*Dacia Mediterranea & Macedonia Secunda in the 6th Century: A question of influence on church architecture*” by Carolyn S. Snively, p. 217

¹⁵ *Forever* [adverb. Latin].



Above: a golden cross-pendant from the 6th century
Negotino, Republic of Macedonia

Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy

Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was the next great step in the history of Macedonian Apostolic Church. Macedonian Archdiocese with its ecumenical archiepiscopacy Justiniana Prima due to assimilation, separatism and discrepancies of the various eparchies that once belonged to her, after the fall of the emperor Maurice (that had been killed in AD 602 following the mutiny among the Danube forces), and under the pressure of the Avar, Bulgar, and other barbaric invasions from the northeast, in the year AD 602 retreated from Skopje to Ohrid, and as of then became also known as *Ohrid Archiepiscopacy*. The Ohrid Archiepiscopacy fully inherited the jurisdiction over the same eparchies of Justiniana Prima, and in many medieval sources is indifferently noted by the same old title. John Skilitzes, Quien and Farlati, for example, equally identify Justiniana Prima with Ohrid and New Epirus (Lat. *Epirus Nova*).¹⁶ The highest presiding body of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was the Episcopal Holy Synod in Ohrid, constituted by bishops from all eparchies, and was headed by the supreme patriarch, the Ohrid Archbishop.

The last structures of the church organization from the (old) Justiniana Prima in northern parts of the Macedonian Peninsula vanished after AD 614.¹⁷ But even if heavily diminished in eparchies and cornered in Ohrid, Macedonian Apostolic Church never ceased to be the supreme center and only reliable influential Christian institution in Macedonia and the wider region of Macedonian Peninsula. We can see that from the neighboring church eparchies in the new Bulgar vassal kingdom, where under strong supervision from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma the official liturgical language of the Bulgar eparchies until AD 893 remained the Romeian Septuagint version of highly corrupted ancient Macedonic Koine - when it was surpassed by Macedonic language and rite. Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, beside its ecumenical duties, functioned also as a cultural stronghold of the Macedonian nation and its aspirations for freedom and independence from Constantinople and Romeian yoke. Thus, its ecumenically inherited independence and complicity with popular masses generated different rebellions and uprisings, like the one of the prince Hacon (614-616).

The periodical forced restoration of the Eastern Romeian power in Macedonia and Thessaly retook during the reign of the dowager-empress Irene, when the Romeian army led by the logothete Stavre (Lat. *Stavracious*) defeated and subjugated the Macedonians in 783. The introduction of the theme system (which meant new divisions in an attempt to subjugate the ever rebel Macedonians) began after this event. What followed was a massive Romeian colonization in the areas of Strymon, especially in 810-811, during the reign of Nikephoros. By this renewed colonization Constantinople aim was to further Romanize the Macedonians, and also to reduce the threat from the invading Mongolic tribes of Magyars, Avars and particularly Bulgars under Khan Krum. However, despite all the efforts of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to maintain its dominant ecclesiastic and ruling position in the Macedonian Peninsula, due to linguistic affinities it failed to do so. The imposed administrative Roman Latin and Romeian Septuagint version of Koine were inevitably replaced by the vernacular Macedonic liturgical language and the reformed

¹⁶ "Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces Danubiennes de l'Empire Romain" by Jacques Zeiller, 1967, p.385 footnote: "Oriens christianus" Vol. II, p.281.

¹⁷ "The Church in the Final Period of the Late Roman Danubian Provinces" by Alexandru Madgearu, 2010.

Glagolitic Script that was used by Ohrid Archiepiscopate as of 9th century - the **Cyrillic**. This modified Glagolic script, was adjusted for wider popular acceptance into simpler version by **SS. Cyril and Methodius**, and later was renamed into "**Cyrillic**" by their disciples Naum and Kliment Ohridski, in honor of its inventor and compiler.



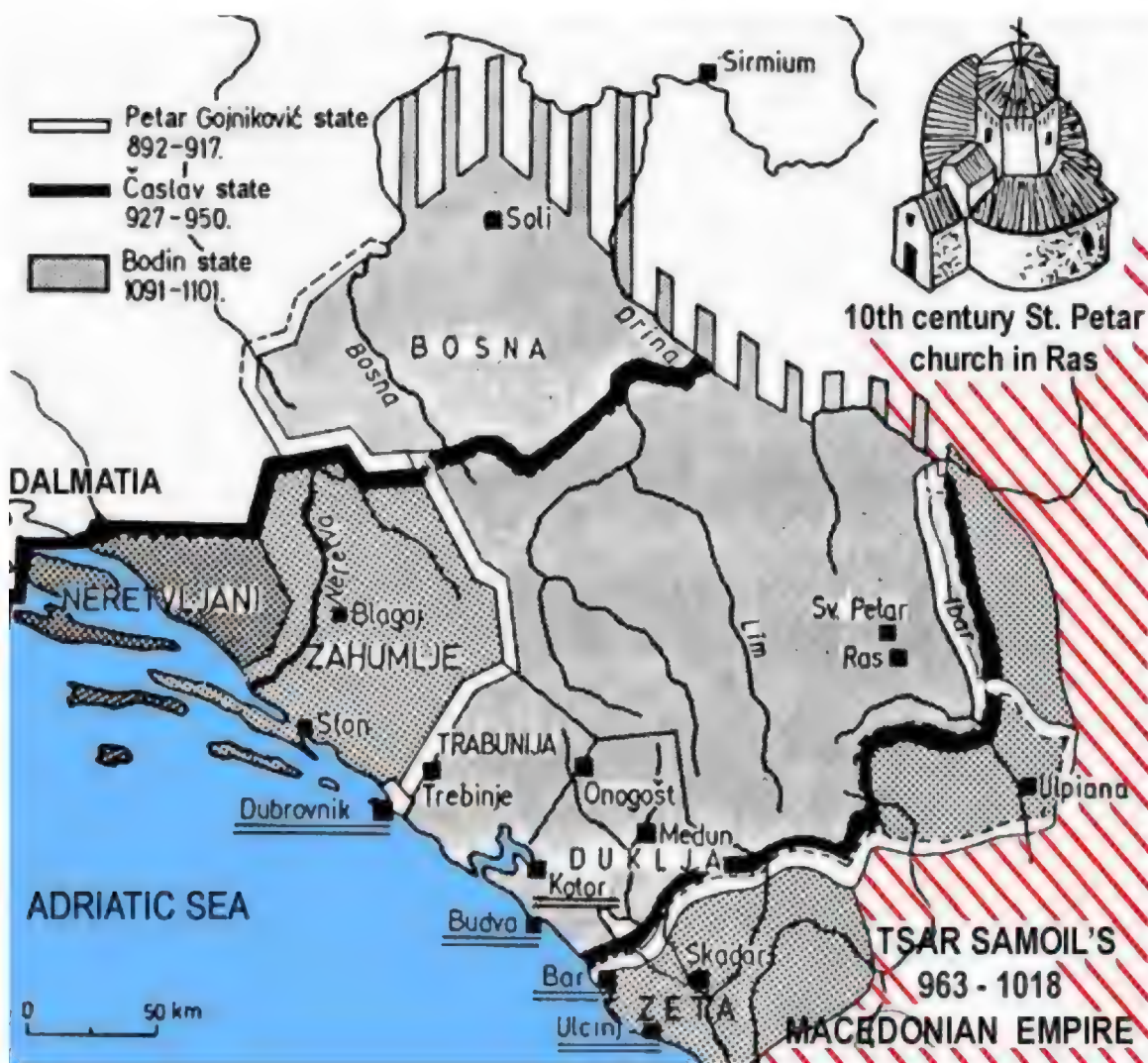
Seeing the relentless popularity of Macedonian Apostolic Church form of rite, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in 9th century changed radically its policy toward the Macedonic liturgy and script. Acknowledging that they cannot eradicate it, nor ignore the fact of its capillary popular diffusion across the whole Macedonian Peninsula and central Europe, the Romeian emperors then tried to use it as a tool in their avail, by recognizing it and helping its propagation. Nonetheless, in that time the Romeian political power reached its apogee under the leadership of the Macedonian Dynasty (867-1056). As former territories were incorporated in their empire, through Macedonic Apostolic Church disciples and their vastly popular preaching and liturgy they re-approached the old era Macedonic cosmopolitan element of multicultural policy.

The most responsible for these great Macedonic revival were the two erudite Macedonian priests and saints, Cyril and Methodius. They were born in Solun¹⁸ in the family of a well-to-do Romeian drouggar

¹⁸ Latin: *Thessalonica*, from Macedonic "*Tesalo-Nika*" - 'Victory over Thessalia'

(lat. *Drouggarios* - a military and administrative official in the Romeian empire)¹⁹ by name Lav.²⁰ Born in AD 826, Cyril was the youngest of the seven children in the family. Methodius was about ten years older. The countryside around Solun was predominantly Macedonic, and the brothers grew up with a native knowledge of the local Macedonian dialect. After having the best education of their time they became the finest ecclesiastic and diplomatic agents of the emperor and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. Their ecumenical/diplomatic missions in Arabia and Khazar Khanate are well known.

First the Principality of Raška (i.e. today *Servia/Serbia*) due to geographical, ethnical and ecclesiastic vicinity officially adopted the Old Church Macedonic rite and Glagolic/Cyrillic script from Macedonia already in 862.



Above: principality of Ras (Raška) in the 9-11th century

In 863 the prince Rastislau of Great Moravia followed the suit and requested from Konstantinopolitana

¹⁹ From pure Macedonic "Drugar"- pall, friend in plain Macedonian.

²⁰ "Lion" in plain Macedonian.

Nova Roma to send Macedonic Christian missionaries, in order to introduce Macedonic rite and script in his kingdom, in a language that his suzerains could've understand. *"You are from Solun. All people from there speak Macedonic language fluently,"*²¹ the Romeian emperor Michael dismissed Constantine/Cyril, the philosopher, and his brother the abbot Methodius with these words as they commenced their mission amongst the overland Macedonic community in Great Moravia. Emperor Michael was fully aware of the power of Old Church Macedonic rite, and its profound acceptance as a medium among the Macedonic population across the Macedonic peninsula. No other tongue, neither the Roman administrative Latin, nor any other language had the Macedonian immaculate and sincere intimacy to the Word of God, emperor Michael correctly saw in it the opportunity of further enlarging his authority and empire's influence abroad.



Europa um 800

SS. Cyril and Methodius first mission amongst the Moravians took place during that renaissance period, as the Romeian empire entangled into great political turmoil and opened up for the first time to the world

²¹ "Vatroslav Jagich (1838-1923) was a Croatian language researcher and a famous expert in the area of Slavic languages (Slavistics) in the second half of the 19th century. He was very interested in the language of the old Slavs (staroslavenski jezik, Old Church Slavonic), concluded and proved that it did not originate in "the central plains of Pannonia" as most experts claimed, but in southern (Aegean) Macedonia." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatroslav_Jagi%C4%87

which had previously been regarded with diffidence, if not outright hostility. Cyril and his brother Methodiy did not actually traveled down the Via Diagonalis from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in 863.



Left: **St. Jovan Bigorski monastery bell tower**

Instead, they took the via Axis (lat. *Axius*) which goes north from Solun along the homonymous river *Axios* (i.e. *Bardarios* or today Vardar river) north to Episcopal Skopje / ex Justiniana Prima, then to Naissus, Sirmium, and up to Belgrad. Then in adopting the Old Church Macedonic rite/language and Glagolic/Cyrillic script next followed Bosnia in 867. SS Cyril and Methodius then journeyed up the Danube before travelling first to Venice and then to Rome (AD 869), where they had been summoned by the Pope Nicolas I. The next year (870) saw the new Bulgar settlers in Moesia and Thrace officially accepting Christianity. The problem of the newly formed Bulgar church in Preslav was settled at the ecclesiastical Council of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in AD 870 - it was reintegrated within the Macedonian Archdiocese. In the same year with the papal bull the Glagolitic/Cyrillic script became the fourth official holy alphabet (after Hebrew, Septuagint Koine and Latin) with which the word of god was to be preached. Why it was officially recognized by the Roman Papacy? - With this move old Rome just wanted to copy the same stratagem used by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma - a compromising-patronage policy of recognizing and legalizing under its aegis the so widely accepted and popular Macedonic linguistic medium of communication of coveted Macedonian Apostolic Church and widespread Macedonian Bogomilism. It was simply the “if you can’t win them, join them”

stance, because the centuries of cruel persecutions and antagonism against Macedonian Apostolic Church didn't manage to sway the Macedonic Christians not one step away from the path traced by the holy teachings of their lord in heaven.

All these events occurred in the course of a single decade, the sixties of the ninth century. This period is also significant as the time in which the reinforced and newly institutionalized Macedonic culture had strong return and progress among the Macedonians and other Macedonic peoples across the Macedonian Peninsula. It was indeed a great decade in the history of Macedonia and the Romeian empire.

Further, the Old Church Macedonic rite and Glagolic/Cyrillic script was introduced in the Czech principality (in 873), Croatia (in 877), Wallachia (today *Romania*), Moldavia, etc. Thus, the Macedonian Apostolic Church and its Holy See in Ohrid never ceased to be the main epicenter of the Macedonic culture and Christianity, even though the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was still closely surveyed and retained within the political sphere of interests of the East-Romeian empire.

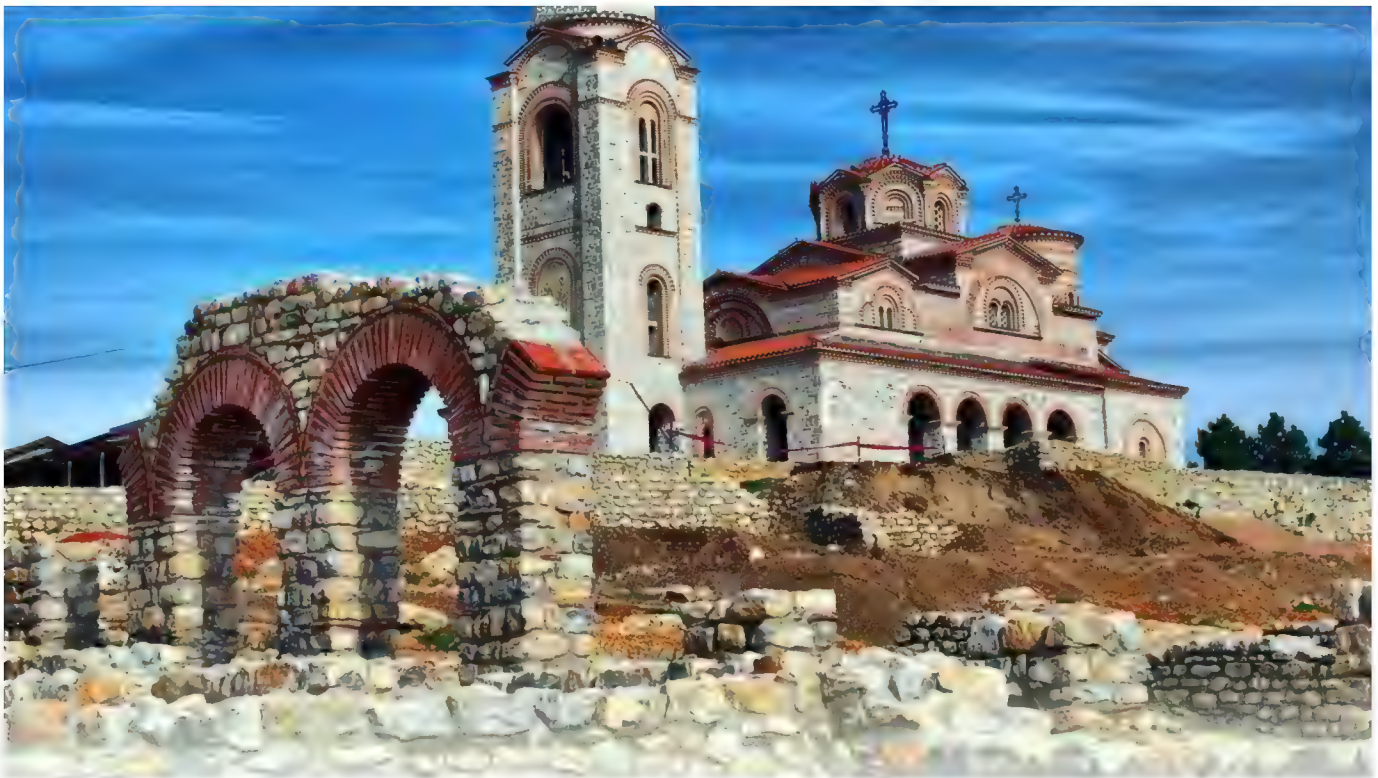
Then (in 10th century) the Glagolic/Cyrillic liturgy in Old Church Macedonic language finally reached the Kievan Russia, where it became the official ecclesiastic language and script, and from there spread across other areas in East Europe, Asia and Africa (see Coptic).²² Namely, after the Russian attack on Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in AD 860 intensive collaboration and contacts with Macedonia and Macedonian Apostolic Church began in the young newly formed Russian state. Kiev, then in open war with Constantinople, looked for Christianity elsewhere - in Macedonia. In the following (10th) century, in order to assist its ally against Romeian empire, Tsar Samoil sent from Macedonia to Kievan Russia bishops, priests and deacons, and loads of holy books, with which were laid the foundations of the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy, liturgy and literacy. And after the official conversion of the Russians to Christianity in AD 988, from Macedonia to Russia, carried by the Macedonian clergy, continued to flow entire volumes of Christian Macedonic education, culture and traditions. As Paul R. Magosci explains: *"One thing is certain: the written language of Kievan Rus' was not based on any of the spoken languages or dialects of the inhabitants. In other words, it had no basis in any of the East Slavic dialects, nor did it stem from some supposed older form of Ukrainian, Belorussian or Russian. Rather, it was a literary language, known as "Old Slavonic" (read "Old Macedonic!"), originally based on the dialects of Macedonia, an imported linguistic medium based on Old Macedonian"*.²³ M. Speranski explicitly underlines that in the first years of Christianity in Russia the Macedonic influence was the *"most fundamental"*, while M. G. Popruženko calls Ohrid Archiepiscopacy *"the pillar of the Orthodox Russia"*. For the undeniably strong ties between Macedonian and Russian churches speaks the unmistakable evidence of the very first Metropolitan of Kiev, Michail, who was an ecclesiastic deputy sent from the Ohrid Patriarchate hierarchy. Accordingly, Russian church's position was under the jurisdiction of Archdiocese Macedonia and the then Ohrid Patriarchate (and later Archiepiscopacy again) until 1037.

²² In this stadium of development it remained almost unchanged in Eastern Europe and Asia until today as modern "Russian language". Modern Russian language is nothing else than the most originally preserved form of Old Church Macedonic, now used as official language in Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, and the rest of the Russian Federation.

²³ "A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples" by Paul R. Magosci, p. 107.

Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archbishopcy Literacy School and St. Klement Ohridski University

It is known that the University of St. Klement Ohridski on Plaošnik, at the end of 9th century already schooled some 3500 Cyrillic students. The Macedonian holy scripture there was studied and transmitted further by myriad of dedicated deacons, that through learning and preaching the Church Macedonic rite continued the enormous work of SS Cyril and Methodius. The founders of University and the Ohrid Church Literacy School, St. Naum and St. Klement Ohridski, were one of the most distinguished disciples of the SS Cyril and Methodius missionaries of in Great Moravia. After their forced expulsion on behalf of the German priesthood from Velegrad, the Moravian capital, they were forced to escape south, in Macedonia, where they founded their schools and churches.



Above: restoration from the very rubles of the 9th century basilica of St. Klement Ohridski University at Plaošnik, Lake Ohrid

In the course of 10th and 11th centuries in these Library and Literacy centers studied and worked great number of literacy scholars, which were direct pupils of St. Klement and St. Naum. In that period of one hundred years (916-1018) were created numerous literacy monuments, which in first hand were written in Glagolitic, but soonafter had began the parallel Glagolitic - Cyrillic transcription. From the ten oldest preserved Cyrillic evangels eight were created in the 10th century Ohrid literacy school. The precise dating and localization was made possible and published in the studies by Russian scholar V. Moshin.²⁴

²⁴ “Ancient Cyrillic Manuscripts” and “Paleographic Album of Southslavic Cyrillic Script” by Vladimir Moshin (1966), published in Macedonia in 2011.

Thus, in the time of Tsar Samoil the Ohrid Archiepiscopal Literacy Scholl was the only great center of the Macedonic Literacy. And after the fall of the Bulgar kingdom and the death of Romeian emperor John II Tzymitsckes, Samoil conquered northern parts of Bulgaria until Lower Danube, and became neighbor of the Kievan Russia. This succession of the events made the fast-track communication between Macedonia and Russia possible. Thus, the Christianization of Kievan Russians in AD 988 was performed by the Macedonian preachers and Macedonic liturgy books and evangels from Ohrid. As confirmation to this avail firmly stand the numerous preserved Macedonian literacy monuments from the 10th century Russia: the Novgorod leafs²⁵ - remnants of Macedonian imperial evangel sent to Russia in 991; the Putyatinski evangel - confirmed Ohrid Literary School translation from original Septuagint Koine evangel; Limonariy psalter - with clear Bogomil tendencies; Evgenievski, Pogodinoff and Tolstoyevski psalters - obvious remnants of the Glagolitic psalters from Ohrid²⁶; the 'Words' of Gregoriy; the 'Pandects' of Antioch; Illina book - a Macedonic liturgical dictionary²⁷; etc. Paleographic and Orthographic, linguistic and textual particularities of all these and other literary monuments show their undeniable Macedonic origin and their extraordinary overland movement from the then Macedonian Church Patriarchate to Kiev principality.



Above: 9th-century monastery of St. Naum on the Lake Ohrid in 1928. The tower was demolished by the communist regime of the Yugoslavian Federation after the WW2

²⁵ "Novgorod leafs and Ostromiroff evangel" by Vladimir Moshin, published in the 'Archaeographic Adds' 5, 1983.

²⁶ "Slavia Christiana and historically-cultural context of Russian literacy teachings" by V. M. Živov, 2000.

²⁷ "Anonymous Slavic Canon of Archangel Michael. Attribution, localization and dating" by A. M. Pentkovski, 2010.

Why is this matter of the widely accepted Macedonic rite/language so important? Because the possession of a common language is, in fact, the basis of a nationality, just as the possession of a common government is the basis of a nation. The claims of a nationality must be decided on linguistic grounds, those of a nation on political grounds, while racial unity is determined by kinship in blood and physiological traits. The “*imported linguistic medium based on Old Macedonian*” in Kievan Russia was the one that Russians could understand. Macedonic was the language destined to express the God’s Word, which “*will not pass away*” (Mt 24:35).

How far the Macedonic people and language were (and still are!) actually spread in Medieval Europe anyone can easily deduce from the toponyms: *Hamburg* old name (before the 8th century) was *Treva* - ‘grass’ in plain Macedonian, accordingly to the landscape which is grassy, as the barren soil there simply doesn’t permits any higher vegetation. *Berlin* means ‘den’ city - *berlog* i.e. *b’rlog* in plain Macedonian; *Leipzig* is the city - *lipa* in plain Macedonian; *Vienna* is ‘curved’ - *viena* in plain Macedonian, etc. etc. Despite the invention of the modern nations, which are the 18-19th centuries creation, and respective corrupted “new” languages for the greater part of Europe, this and many other testimonies of the Macedonic language and script show that the basis of the distinguished Macedonian nationality was already a distinguished category as of the time of Filip II and Alexander the Great. Their achievements and everlasting glory represent probably the highest peak in the whole Macedonian history, and Alexander’s heredity was justifiably remembered by the 19th century Macedonian bard, lecturer and scholar, Georgi Pulevski, in his 1879 song „*For the Macedonians*”:

*Our fatherland is this place so dear to Macedonians
It was a kingdom under King Filip
An old empire of Alexander the Tsar.
Our Macedonian Tsar renown in the whole wide universe
as Alexander the Great.
He left his empire in the Balkan Peninsula
To all Macedonian highlanders... ²⁸*

From this perturbing medieval period it is evident that the Old Church Macedonic language and liturgy won the centennial battle against assimilatory attempts of the theocratic institutions of both Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople and Roman Papacy in Rome. In front of the uncontested popular acceptance of the Macedonian Apostolic Church they both failed to impose their institutional ecclesiastic supremacy over Macedonian Peninsula and wider region of central and eastern Europe. The simple reason for that was the overall vicinity of the Macedonian Apostolic Church to its own Macedonic people, a close relation that combined with the linguistic vernacular consistency preponderantly managed to defeat the imposed unintelligible elitist-institutional liturgies of the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate and Rome Papacy.

²⁸ Excerpt from the 'Southeastern Europe Joint History', Workbook 2, pp. 105,106.



Above: the expanse of Ohrid Archbishopcy diocese around the year 1000

Huge merit in this succeeding of the events had the Roman Church too, which constantly and by large extent meddled in the ecclesiastic affairs of other autocephalous churches across the Adriatic Sea. In spite of the fact that it was repudiated from the east by Justinian I the Great, western Roman church continued to advocate its predatory claim over the Archdiocese Macedonia through the eparchies that were still more or less under the influence of the papal vicariate in Solun (lat. *Thessaloniki*). To this avail the western Roman church even tried to rename Archdiocese Macedonia into “*Eastern Illyricum Diocese*”, with intention to fetch it to the ex-Roman province of Illyricum on the Adriatic coast, and this Roman-Latin name was meant for instauration of an exarchate (extraterritorial church) there, in attempt to rearrange and undermine the unquestionable power and influence of the Ohrid Archbishopcy and ultimate Holy See in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma in Macedonian Peninsula. Nevertheless, this artificial exarchate attempt largely failed due to the natural and factual independence of the Macedonian Archdiocese and its eparchies, and thanks to the inexcusable violations of the ecclesiastic rules by the Papal church in Rome, in an attempt to forcibly apply its rule over churches in Macedonia. For example, the pope Siricius (384-399) tempted the violation of the 6th rule of the First Church Synod from AD 325, by non-canonically and illegally giving higher ecclesiastic powers to the archbishop Anisius of Solun over other episcopacies, and

by trying to impose unprecedented centralization over Archdiocese Macedonia. Siricius miserable attempt largely failed, and provoked only unanimous rebellion among the Macedonian clergy and episcopacies, that all stood together against this deprived ecclesiastic misappropriation and blasphemy. Throughout the millennia Macedonian Apostolic Church firmly remained on its course traced by Apostle Paul teachings, professed by the god's disciple on earth, Jesus Christ.



Above: 7th century monastery in Vodoča, R. of Macedonia

Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy during the reign of Tsar Samoil and the emergence of Bogomilism

The 10th century brought even more stateliness and ascendance for the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. During the reign of Tsar Samoil (969-1018) Ohrid Archiepiscopacy became totally independent from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, and became even more influential, also thanks to the reviewed relationship and reconfirmed ecclesiastic recognition by the Roman papal state. Then, from old Rome the new Macedonian emperor requested and obtained badly needed international recognition from another Holy See. In 999 Samoil coronation was performed under the triple aegis of the western Roman Papacy, Ohrid and Tarnovo Archiepiscopacies. The Macedonian Apostolic Church was then also elevated into Ecumenical Patriarchate with the Holy See on the island of St. Ahil in the Lake Small Prespa by the newly enthroned Macedonian emperor.



Above: the remnants of the St. Ahil patriarchate cathedral on the homonymous island in the Lake Small Prespa

Below: map of the island of St. Ahil, the Ecumenical Patriarchate capital and Holy See of Samoil's Macedonic Empire



But, the Macedonian Apostolic Church rapid ascendance was also thanks to the appearance of the new form of Christianity, of yet another autochthonous Macedonic popular Christian movement - the **Bogomilism**.²⁹ The Bogomilism was the great popular medieval Christian movement that supported

²⁹ The first actual Protestant church in Europe. Severely oppressed and persecuted, as equally condemned and excommunicated by both Eastern-Rightglorified and Western-Catholic church. See: THE MACEDONIAN GENIUS THROUGH THE CENTURIES by Giorgio Nurigiani. 1972, pp. 64,67,68. Also: "The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism" by Dimitri Obolensky. 1948, pp.151, 259: "From the combined evidence of geographical factors, of indirect historical data and of later sources, which must now be examined, it is possible to prove that the cradle and subsequent stronghold of Bogomilism in the Balkans was Macedonia."

without reserve the Macedonian independency from Constantinople and other ecclesiastic holy centers. Bogomils performed real patriotic deeds and gave their assistance to Tsar Samoil when he and his brothers started the revolt against the long lasting occupation and feudal yoke of Romeians from Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma and their Bulgar vassals. In respond, during his four decades reign in Macedonia Tsar Samoil reformed Macedonian church and officialized Bogomil faith within the church institution, with the twin Holy Sees in Ohrid and Prespa, and third one - Ecumenical Patriarchate in St. Ahil island, and allowed them to live freely in his empire that stretched from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, and from Thessalia to Danube. And accordingly - the followers of Bogomilism became the strongest constituent part of the reformed Samoil' state church on the territory of Macedonia.



In terms of *heresies* and in particular the relationship between the dualism practiced by the Bogomils and that practiced by the later dualist sects (descended from Bogomilism) in Bosnia, northern Italy and southern France (respectively *Patarens*, *Cathars* and *Albigenses*), affirm to be proof of continuity and vivid exchanges between the different areas of Europe. Links between the Bogomils, the Patarens and the Cathars/Albigenses are such that it cannot be but taken into account. In his book, '*The Origins of the Dualist Church of Dragunthia*' Bernard Hamilton also concludes that western heretics considered theirs and the one in Macedonia to be "*a single communion*". If anything, the real dichotomy was between moderate dualists and absolute dualists. In any case, both can be traced back to Macedonia.

The link between the Bogomils and western "*Girovagi*"³⁰ was first admitted by the priest Cosma in his 'anti-heretic' lecture with the aim of highlighting the "*parasitical aspects*" of the "perfecti". This implies that an active part of the sect was anxious to proselytize and was continuously moving from one village to

³⁰ 'Wanderers' in plain Italian; yet another name for Bogomils, Patarens, Cathars and the Albigenses, as they were wandering/escaping in front of the cruel persecutions by official medieval church institutions (i.e. Inquisition).

the next, both to ensure that they were not a burden on the same group of followers and to spread the Bogomil credo in a more capillary manner. An inference which is reinforced by the fact that many homonyms in Macedonia still echo the names and nicknames bestowed on the sect's followers by local people.

Les évêques cathares européens, mil. XII^e s. - mil. XIII^e s.



The diffusion of Bogomilism in Bosnia starting in the 11th century under the name '*Patarene faith*' gives us a glimpse into future links with the west, underlined by the arrival of the first crusaders and their return overland. The fact that a number of orthodox opposers called the Catharist heresy "*Macedonic*" can also be seen as evidence of the influence of Bogomil rites on Catharist rites. In spite of the obvious efforts made to disguise it, the spread of the Bogomil faith cannot but have taken place by overland routes.³¹

Undoubtedly the power of Samoil's state was largely due to the support of Bogomils. But, the acceptance and promotion of this popular dualist form of Christian religion by Samoil is one of the reasons why his empire was finally defeated – Eastern Romeian and Western Roman church institutions made desperate efforts to extirpate the Bogomilism (and its western-European disciples Cathars and Albigenses), which was condemned as heresy by both of them. So, even though the Roman papacy (for political reasons) supported the coronation of Tsar Samoil and promoted the Macedonian Archdiocese inauguration into Ecumenical Patriarchate, and beside all its Christianimosity against Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma - the Bogomilism wasn't condoned.

³¹ "Overland Balkan Routes in the Middle Ages" by Fabrizio Vanni - Centro Studi Romei Firenze, p. 8,9. See also: "The Macedonian Genius Through The Centuries" by Giorgio Nurigiani, 1972. p.64,67,68.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/81525243/The-Macedonian-Genius-Through-the-Centuries>



Above: the island of Golem Grad in Lake Prespa, Macedonia. A medieval stronghold and Holy Sanctuary of the Bogomils, destroyed by the Crusaders in 1096

In AD 995 under the jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church, then situated both in Ohrid and Prilep, were the following eparchies: Prespa, Devol, Glavenitsa (Lat. *Cephalonia*), Iraklea (Lat. *Heraclea*, today Bitola), Morodvis, Meglen, Tiveriopol (Lat. *Tiberiopolis*, today Strumitsa), Ber (Lat. *Beroia*), Ser (Lat. *Serres*), Larisa, Navpact, Drač (Lat. *Dyrachium*), Skopje, Ulpiana (today Lipjan), Prizren, Ras, Srem (Lat. *Sirmium*), Belgrad, Braničevo, Vidin (i.e. Budin), Triade (or *Sredets*, today Sofia), Niš (Lat. *Naisus*), Velbužd, and Preslav.

The growing and renewed power and the very independence of the Macedonian Apostolic Church and the new Ecumenical Patriarchate of Tsar Samoil's were finally challenged and cruelly suppressed by the Romeian emperor Basil II Porphyrogenitus (paradoxally - he too born Macedonian, from Adrianople). After almost 40 years of more or less intense warfare he finally managed to destroy the Samoil's Macedonic Empire, reoccupy Macedonia, and put once again the Macedonian Apostolioc Church with all its eparchies under direct control of the Holy See in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. But, surprisingly enough, again with almost total independence over its eparchies. After his victory Basil II was as moderate and sensible as he has been ruthless during the military campaign. Well, Macedonians were his kin after all.

But, pogroms against Bogomils returned on the order of the day, and as a cause of the unprecedented brutality and persecutions by the official church institutions they dispersed further north and west across Europe...



Above: **the execution of the Bogomil priest Vasil (i.e. *Basil*) in Constantinople**

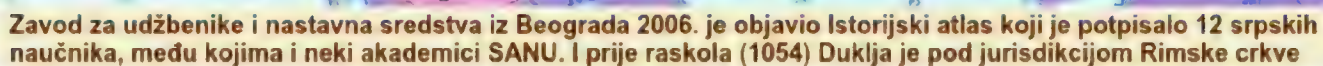
After the collapse of Samoil's Macedonian state the Macedonian Patriarchate was reduced again into Archiepiscopacy, and the Macedonian Apostolic Church passed under direct ecumenical rule of Basil II Porphyrogenitus in the year of 1018. In that same year Basil reached the Macedonian Archiepiscopacy in Ohrid, where he received homage from Samoil's widow and other members of the family. Then the Romeian emperor issued three bulls to the Macedonian church in 1019, in May 1020 and between 1020 and 1025. Following the wise policy of his predecessor Justinian I the Great, he didn't suppress the jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy as expected. On contrary, he re-confirmed to the Holy See of Ohrid the highest jurisdiction over its previous ecclesiastical provinces, thirty-one in total. And although he reduced the prelate's title from patriarch to archbishop, the then head of the Macedonic Patriarchate, Jovan Debarski (John of Debar), remained in office as Archbishop of Ohrid.

This move was again due to the already mentioned Christianimosity and ecclesiastic rivalry between the old Rome and Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. Roman Papacy failed again to take back reclaimed possessions in the Macedonian Peninsula by seemingly supporting Macedonian independency. In the imperial Bull of 1019 issued by Basil II Porphyrogenitus, 17 eparchies of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy were listed. With each Episcopal See, towns under its jurisdiction were listed and the number of clerics and

parishioners written down. In the second Bull to the Archdiocese of Ohrid, another 14 eparchies were added to the list, thus totaling 31, including:

1. Ohrid-Prespa eparchy (Archiepiscopal Holy See) with Kičevo, Prespa, Mala Prespa and Mokra;
2. Kostur eparchy;
3. Vutron eparchy in southern Arbania (or Arvania, today *Albania*)³²;
4. Irakliska (*Bitola*) eparchy with Pelagonia, Prilep, Veles and Debar;
5. Meglenska eparchy with Prosek and Mariovo;
6. Strumička eparchy with Radoviš and Konče;
7. Morodvis (Bregalnička) eparchy with Kozjak, Slavište, Zletovo, Maleševo and Štip (lat. *Astibo*);
8. Velbužd (today *Kyustendil*) eparchy;
9. Sredec (today *Sofia*) eparchy;
10. Niš (lat. *Naisus*) eparchy;
11. Branichevska eparchy along the Morava valley with Smederevo;
12. Belgrade (lat. *Singidunum*) eparchy;
13. Srem (lat. *Sirmium*) eparchy;
14. Skopje (lat. *Scupensis/Scopis*) eparchy with Bineč, Lukovo, Preamor and Princip;
15. Prizren (lat. *Prisdiana*) eparchy with Polog and Leskovec;
16. Lipljan eparchy (lat. *Ulpiana*, i.e. *Justiniana Secunda*) with Kosovo Pole;
17. Ras (*Raška*) eparchy;
18. Belgrade (today *Berat* in Albania) eparchy in *Nova Epirus*;
19. Vidin (i.e. Budin) eparchy;
20. Kozil eparchy;
21. Orosh eparchy west of Prizren;
22. Drinopole eparchy in Arbania with Argirocastro;
23. Imerska eparchy in Arbania north of Corfu;
24. Glavenička eparchy with Devol and Kutmichevitsa;
25. Janinska (*Ioanina*) eparchy in Epirus;
26. Stash eparchy in Thessalia
27. Velsh eparchy south of Drinopole;
28. Servitsa (Selfidže) eparchy southwest of Solun (*Thessalonika*);
29. Ber eparchy west of Solun (*Thessalonika*);
30. D'rstar (Silistra) eparchy with Tarnovo in what is now northern Bulgaria;
31. Chernička eparchy with *Dyrrachium* (today *Dürres*), with the last episcopos of Durrës under the auspices of Ohrid Archdiocese mentioned in the year 1280.

³² Still preserved in Greek and Turkish, as *Arvanites* and *Arvanutluk* respectively, due to the lack of the consonant letter for “b” in Greek alphabet; from “Arabat” - mercenary.



Above and on the next page: **the maps that show ecclesiastic domain of Ohrid Archbishopric with the main episcopal sees in X and at the beginning of XI century**



Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy between the Crusades and the emergence of the new nations

The late Middle Ages in Macedonia were evident by more warring, crisis, and more foreign invasions. The gradual decline of the Holy Roman Empire, and consequently of the Macedonian Apostolic Church, was long lasting but unrelenting process. The 13-14 centuries collapse of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma was caused by many terms, but mainly from the fermenting and unstoppable rise of the new eastern and western powers - the Mongolic Golden Horde, the Islamic Mohammedans, and the new Roman Holy Empire respectively. The difference of the last two from the respective previous Persian and Roman empires was enormous. In the east the Crescent was gaining more and more religious, military and political power, annihilating on its way all the previous religions and kingdoms by, let's say it again - the brute force of sword and fire. Islam rising and advance was largely on the expense of the Roman Empire territory. In the west the Roman papacy have found a new powerful ally in the newly formed Frankish kingdom, which, through the brute force of sword and fire, will later become the powerful Holy Roman Empire. In an attempt to unite western Christendom under one rule, with the coronation of Charlemagne as emperor in the year 800, Rome had found a powerful ally. At its height the territory of this 9th-century brand new "Holy Roman Empire" included *Germany*, *German "Oster-reich"* (i.e. "Eastern-kingdom", today *Austria*), *Switzerland*, and parts of Italy and the Netherlands.

Another big issue that caused the inevitable collapse of the Roman Empire was the absence of the universal linguistic factor. The Orthodox Church acted as the sole focus of distinctive collective identity, but, the very important Macedonic linguistic character of the Macedonic Christian communities was neglected. Administrative Latin and other non-vernacular mediums were equally refuted by the large majority of the popular masses. What the wise emperors like Justinian I, Michael and Basil II Porphyrogenitus of Macedonian dynasties have clearly foreseen about the Macedonic rite, language and script, has been lost out of sight during the Komnenos dynasty. Unfortunately, they missed the support of the majority of the population by never realizing that the administrative Latin and Septuagint Koine were not the mediums by which the common people hear and understand Word of God.

Then came the Crusades, a series of medieval wars, instigated by the Roman-catholic church for alleged religious ends. In that moment Europe, and particularly western Medieval Europe, was a terrifyingly violent place. Physical force was used to achieve all sorts of ends. Feudalists and church used violence to exert their cruel power over their subjects and to pursue feuds among each other for political, financial, and territorial gain. The only way they could maintain this status, both as individuals and as a group, wasn't through cultural or peaceful means, but, the perpetual violence and war. Thus, with the excuse to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims, Roman Catholic Church redirected the backwatered western Europe crude violence toward civilized southeastern Europe and Asia Minor, and provoked a series of religious wars in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries.

Crusades had devastating effect on the Macedonian Peninsula. Passing-by western armies and bashibouzuks pillaged and marauded along their way to Asia Minor. Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma after centuries of warring in the east and northeast had no more strength to withstand the both invasions from east and west. Thus, the Fourth Crusade ended with the conquest of Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma, the very center of Orthodoxy, in April of 1204. The barbaric Norman kings, pressing in on weakening Roman Empire, were still depicted on coins and in frescoes wearing Constantinople robes, with inscriptions in Roman Septuagint Koine lettering. The resulting political and territorial

disintegration of the Romeian Empire was the dire consequence, which was actually one of the main reasons for Rome to instigate these wars. Occupying crusaders founded a Latin kingdom with capital in occupied Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma. In the following period Nicaea, which became the seat of the Patriarch of Constantinople (in exile until 1261), fulfilled the role of Ecumenical Holy See. Romeian Empire beside its sovereignty lost the firm hold on the Macedonian Peninsula too, and separatist divisions ensued, and the decline of Constantinople reflected into further decline of the Macedonian Apostolic Church as well.

Following the general decline of Constantinople power new statelets started to pop-up all over the Macedonian Peninsula. In eastern Macedonian Peninsula in 1175 the Wallachian king Ivan Asen founded the Second Bulgar Empire. In 1176 he also established an independent Bulgar church in Tarnovo. The Second Bulgar Empire occupied also parts of Macedonia, but nevertheless it left the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy to act independently, only by reducing its jurisdiction on behalf of the newly founded Tarnovo Archiepiscopacy. The Bulgar archbishop installed by Ivan Asen then expelled all Macedonian bishops and in their place put others, which he himself ordained. But, the Second Bulgar Empire didn't succeeded much longer either, and after the death of Tsar Kaloyan in 1207 it gradually declined and disappeared.



In Prosek³³, Macedonia, the Sevastokrat³⁴ Strez also founded a kingdom, and managed to unify the neighboring Macedonian towns, including Ohrid. Ohrid Archiepiscopacy then, already much reduced from initial Macedonian Archdiocese, extended only to the territory of Strez kingdom. However, it remained free from the pressure of emerging Tarnovo Archiepiscopacy. Strez interests and faith coincided with that of the Ohrid Archbishop, in their efforts to preserve the independence of the principality and the Macedonian Archdiocese. During the reign of Strez, the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy managed to restore

³³ Also known as *Stena* in the ancient times, today Demir Kapia.

³⁴ "All-ruling" - from 'Vse-vasto-krator', i.e. *all(mighty)-of everything-ruler* in plain Old Church Macedonic. See also "Avtokrator" (Anglicized: *Autocrat*); and *Sevastopol*, a city in Russia.

some of its eparchies, which were previously taken by the new separatist Tarnovo Archiepiscopacy of Ivan Asen.

After the death of Strez (in 1215) his kingdom was divided too. The Macedonian Archdiocese also found itself divided again by new frontiers - between the newly Latinized by the crusaders Solun Archiepiscopacy and Epirus Despotate. Then Ohrid Archiepiscopacy lost its southern Macedonian eparchies of Meglen and Strumitsa. At this time began the bitter struggle between the corrupted Latinized bishops from Solun and Macedonians. In Ohrid was convened the Assembly of Bishops under the presidency of Archbishop Homatian. At the head of the Macedonian group was the bishop from Meglen, and at the head of Solun group stood the bishop from Voden. A dispute arose concerning the recognition of the rank of those bishops who were appointed by Kaloyan the Bulgar. After the intervention of Todor Komnen Duka (Latin: *Theodore Komnenus Doukas*) a compromise was reached: bishops from Solun appointed by Kaloyan were to leave the episcopacies, and in their place the returning of local bishops from Macedonia was ordered.



Thus, the larger part of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy with Ohrid fell under the rule of the Epirus Despotate of Todor Komnen Duka, and under his protection Macedonian Apostolic Church managed again to return some of the eparchies that were previously seized. The Despotate was centered in the region of Epirus, encompassing also Matia and the western portion of Lower Macedonia, and also included Thessaly and Peloponessus as far south as Nafpaktos. Epirus Despotate seized even Solun, and thanks to it and despite all the misfortunes, Macedonian Apostolic Church retained its ecclesiastic dominant position in the Macedonian Peninsula and managed again to extend its jurisdiction by taking back Skopje, Serres and Rascia (i.e. *Serbian*) eparchies. But, with the overall weakening of the Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma

and the Ecumenical Patriarchate authority due to the Crusader Wars, many local rulers and feudal upstarts saw their opportunity for plunder and seizing whatever they could seize. But, they needed ecclesiastic approval for their deeds from somewhere or someone, for their feudal possessions to gain legal stronghold, and any official church might've be good enough. So they non-canonically created their own ones... Thus, the most strongly condemned Ethnophyletism, a heresy which claims that the church should be along national (ethnic) lines in the same geographical area, started to expand across the Macedonian Peninsula.

Sava, the youngest son of the Rascian despot Stephan Nemanja, provides the next blatant illustration of the devastating impact that the Crusades had on the Orthodox Church communities unity in the Macedonian Peninsula and Asia Minor. As a Macedonian Church monk³⁵ on Mt. Athos, in 1218 Sava suddenly went to Nicaea in Asia Minor, and profiting from the dire political conditions of the Romeian Empire he reached (for certain amount of gold) an agreement with the then financially and politically ruined Romeian patriarch and emperor Manuel I Komnenos. With this transaction, he illegally circumvented his superior, the Archbishop of Ohrid, and from common deacon became 'Archbishop' of the non-canonical "Rascia's autonomous church". Here's the condemning letter of the then Archbishop of Ohrid, Homatian, to Sava:

"... If you're emplaced as for 'Bishop', it is ours, and we think rightfully, to ask: How and of which church? In that we are ordered with the divine guidance of sacred canons and pious instructions. If you blessed now became a Bishop, as I hear by gossips from all sides, we want to know where. If it is in Rascia we ask how? If it is the holiest Patriarch of Constantinople, we wonder what's the use? Because if you become bishop on the basis of the right of former emperors to rebuild cities, and then from lower deacon, to erase in higher bishop or metropolitan, as defined in Canons 12 and 17 of Chalcedonian Council and the 38th Canon of the Council in Trullo which met the royal court, then you should be a bishop before yielding to get higher. And you've been nor bishop, nor do you have a royal decision, which would have confirmed your ordination. And where is today the kingdom which has this dignity, now that many have power over different areas, but no one has preserved intact the royal dignity? And since there's no real kingdom, then your ordination lacks legal basis too.

1218, Ohrid"

Despite the protests of the Ohrid Archbishop, religious separatist Sava began to organize its illegal "autocephalous" church. For the 9 breakaway Macedonian eparchies he ordained 9 bishops, mainly brought from Mt. Athos. This very same non-canonical "Serbian Orthodox Church" (SPC), beside its illegal creation, today has even the face to question and deny the very inherence of the incomparably older Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. By giving non-canonical out-of-the-hat inherencies to different newly arranged regional churches, Ecumenical Patriarchate in Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma undermined the overall hierarchy and trust among the Eastern Orthodox institutions and communities. Once powerful and independent as the center of Orthodox Christianity, with actions like this Konstantinopolitana Nova Roma lost its basic direction in managing the ecclesiastic affairs and hierarchy among the subordinate churches within its domain. This state of confusion, where the newly created religious-separatist political churches (Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Serbian...) didn't recognize the authority of the older Archbishoprics, have caused ulterior chaos and impossibility of organizing the all-churches Ecumenical Holy Synod since 1351. Dividing the once united orthodox church along the new national boundaries erode the very essence and meaning of the original Christian credo.

The above mentioned example of unsanctioned SPC ethnophyletism and proselytism is totally opposite to

³⁵ Deacon under jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.

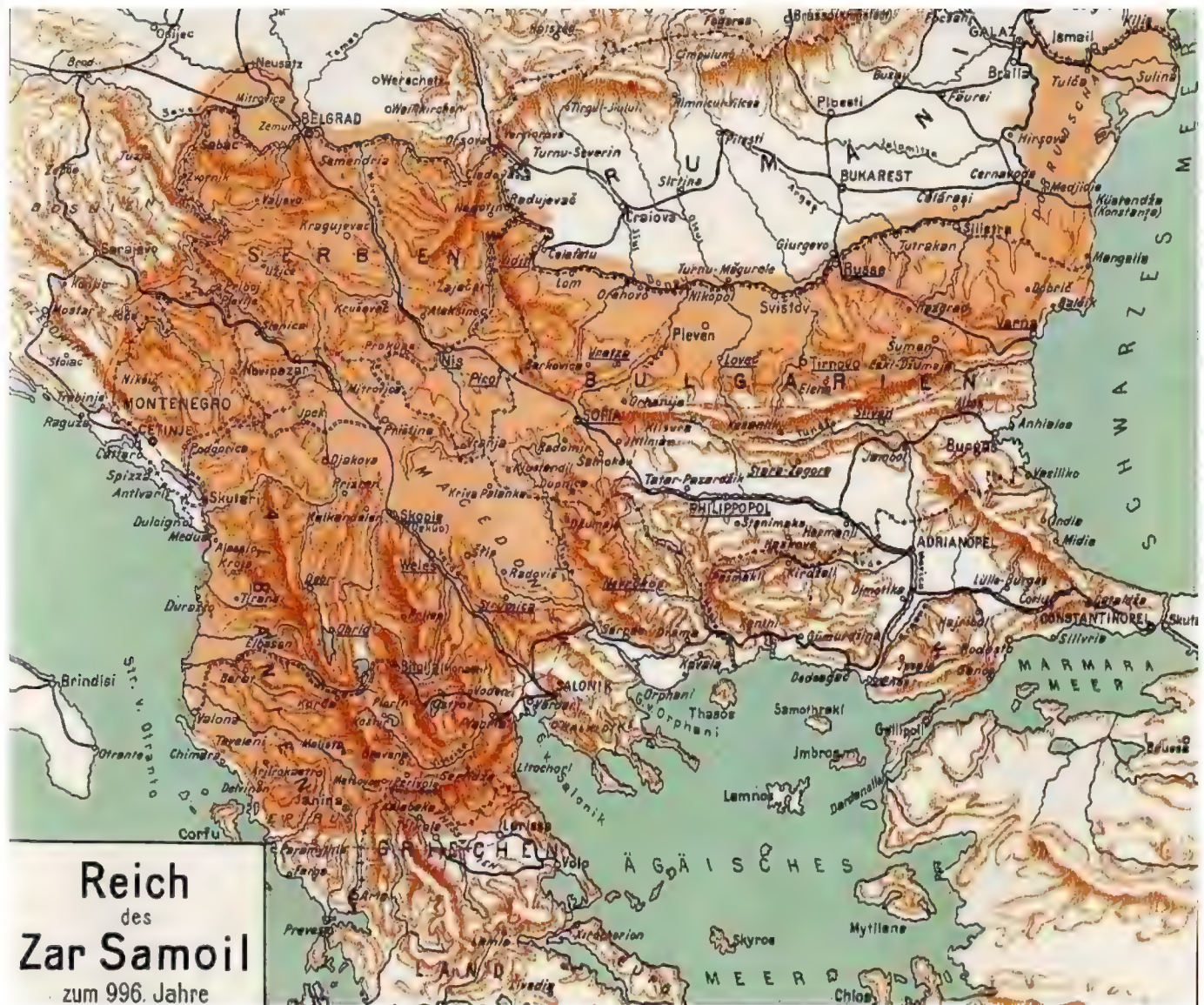
the principles of the Christian Law which clearly states: *“The Bishops of every nation need to know the first one among them, and to consider him the head, and not to do anything without his knowing, but everyone of them should do just that which considers their eparchy and its region. But also the head of all the bishops shouldn't do anything without the knowledge of everybody else (of the bishops). Because only in that way there could be understanding and glorifying of God, through Jesus Christ, in the spirit of Father-the Son-and the Holy Spirit”* - the 34. Apostolic Canon. Almost all the factions, schisms and religious wars between the different churches and other religions were and are provoked by breaking the above holy law. When there is no order of succession (like in the case of Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Serbian, etc. churches) and due respect for the elder churches - treason and destruction are on the order of the day...

Later, when the Serbian state of Rascia was officially created it expanded toward south, and inevitably some eparchies of Macedonian Apostolic Church were placed under the jurisdiction of the new Serbian Orthodox Church.



Thus, when later king Stefan Dushan reigned over the whole territory of Macedonia, his kingdom had two autonomous Archbishoprics - of Ohrid and Peć. Soon Dushan decided to proclaim himself Tsar (i.e. emperor). And according to church canons, the imperial crown could only be received by Patriarch. The 10th century Macedonian Patriarchate of Ohrid lost its rank in the beginning of the 11th, therefore, for crowning Dushan into Tsar it was necessary for the new Serbian church to be declared a Patriarchate. In 1346 a Council was held in Skopje fortress Kale, where Peć archbishop Joannicius II in the presence of

the Archbishops of Ohrid and Tarnovo was named Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and thereafter from his hands Dushan received the imperial Macedonian crown. Why Macedonian? Because with this title, as a Macedonian Tsar, Dušan was aiming to take over the same territories, imperial and ecumenical inherences that were under aegis of the previous Macedonian Tsar, Samoil. His relative relations with the Samoil's daughter who earlier married Jovan Vladimir of Duklja (Lat. *Diocleia*) only eased his way through institutional labyrinths of legalizing the whole enterprise.



Above and on the next page: maps that show the respective empire(s) of Tsar Samoil (963-1018) and Tsar Stefan Dushan (1350)



Ohrid Archbishopric during the rule of Tsar Stefan Dušan remained fully independent. This probably happened as a kind of reward for the support that Macedonian Apostolic Church gave to Dušan in his

coronation. Archbishop was no longer appointed by the king but was elected by the bishops he appointed without interference from the state authorities. Macedonian Archdiocese in Ohrid continued to be a spiritual and cultural center for the Macedonians, which actually made up her whole flock. Dushan behaved correctly and respectfully towards the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Any changes in the Serbian state and church were approved with the participation and blessing of the Macedonian Archiepiscopacy. At that time the Macedonian Apostolic Church was also in good financial position. Dushan and his successors, as a new political power in Macedonia, helped the Macedonian Archdiocese, and at that time many churches and monasteries on its territory were built and restored.

The jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy after the dissolution of Dushan's kingdom was reduced again between several principalities, including the kingdom of Vukashin, who was welcomed at the headquarters of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. King Vukashin, followed by his son Marko, fully respected the authority and autocephaly of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Accordingly, even if largely reduced, the Macedonian Apostolic Church was the only ecclesiastical authority in the Macedonia of Vukashin. And the Archiepiscopacies of Ohrid and Prilep, as well as the kings, relied upon the ethnographic unity of the Macedonian people. In Vukashin time the Macedonian Apostolic Church was on the rise in every respect and expanded territorially. To Ohrid Archiepiscopacy were very closely connected the episcopacies of Skopje, Kičevo and Prizren.

Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy during the occupation of Seljuk Turks



Then in the 14th century came the Turkish invasion. In the last years of the 14th century almost all Macedonia had fallen under Turkish rule, and in 1408 Turks had taken over the Holy See of the autocephalous Macedonian Apostolic Church. Ohrid found itself under the Turkish yoke. Nevertheless, the Turks respected the Macedonian Holy See and its apostolic Christian authority. And despite this new foreign occupation Macedonian Apostolic Church expanded again its jurisdiction. However it suffered great material damage from the Turks. The conquest of Macedonia was accompanied by devastation of towns and villages and looting of Christian properties. Due to the displacement of population episcopacies lost revenue and they got impoverished. There was a massive Islamization of the Macedonians, especially around Polog and Prizren at the confluence of the rivers Drin and Radika. Whole villages converted to Islam in Macedonia.

At the beginning of the 15th century Bulgar Tarnovo Patriarchy disappeared, and Sofia (former Serditsa) and Vidin eparchies had been returned under jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Ohrid archbishop Matey done this by presenting the Ecumenical Bulls of the previous Romeian emperors to the then emperor Manuel Paleolog (Lat. *Paleologus*), in which were underlined the privileges and jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy over these eparchies. In the middle of the same century Wallachia and Moldavia also found themselves under jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Actually in 1452 or 1453 on demand of the Moldavian prince Alexandrel the Ohrid archbishop Nikodim had inaugurated the episcopo Teoxit for Moldavian Metropolitan. Even some orthodox communities in Italy and Dalmatia were under jurisdiction of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.

Then again the relations between the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy and the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchy worsened in 1439, when decadent Constantinople Patriarchy entered in union with Roman-Catholic church. Macedonian church stood firmly against this treacherous political union.

After the death of Serb patriarch Arsenije II in 1463, there was no successor elected. Thus, the Peč Patriarchate was abolished too, and these church eparchies returned again under the jurisdiction of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. With the complete fall of the Macedonian Peninsula under Turkish rule, within the

Turkish borders then were enclosed two more or less independent Orthodox Churches: the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Ohrid archbishops could still help their communities, but the Macedonian Archdiocese was forced to pay huge taxes.



Above: the 15th century Macedonian city depicted by Hartmann Schedel

In the second half of the 16th century Macedonian Apostolic Church once again began to lose territories under its jurisdiction. In 1557 under the sultan Suleiman II the abolished non-canonical Serbian Patriarchate was restored, thanks to the mediation of Turkish pasha³⁶ Mehmed Sokolović, who was Serb by birth. His cousin, one of the bishops under jurisdiction of Macedonian Archdiocese, Makarije Sokolović, was made new patriarch in Peć. The Turks reinstalled the Serbian Church, which then again grabbed some eparchies from Ohrid Archiepiscopacy in western Bulgaria. At the same time the government of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was further restricted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople (i.e. Istanbul). The Patriarchate was eager to restore its authority over the Macedonian Peninsula and to diminish the power of the Macedonian Apostolic Church by illegally giving the ecclesiastic jurisdiction over different eparchies in the hands of the newly non-canonically created national-political churches.

³⁶ Pasha - 'prince' in plain Turkish.

But, that wasn't all. Due to the brutal Turk oppression and slaughter many Macedonic communities migrated toward north, and together with their hierarchs refuged to Austro-Hungary, where they had been granted autonomy in the border region of Vojvodina. Then, under the auspices of Habsburg Monarchy, in 1708, another autonomous and non-canonical Serbian Orthodox Exarchate church³⁷ of Sremski Karlovci was created. Nonetheless, Turks promptly responded to the creation of this political Serbian Exarchate in Sremski Karlovci by permitting the creation of yet another one, third Serbian Episcopacy in Belgrad. Thus, the incessant 18-19th centuries belligerent confrontation between Ottoman empire and Austro-Hungary and Russia resulted with overnight appearance of many purely political churches and tribes, that started to emerge rapidly across the whole Macedonian Peninsula.



The Ottomans finally and officially (once again!) abolished the non-canonical Serbian Church in 1766. And due to numerous uprisings against the Turkish occupying forces in Macedonian Peninsula, in which the church had a leading role, and under cunning accusations from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople/Istanbul, the very next year (1767) they abolished the Bulgar, and, even the autocephalous Macedonian Apostolic Church. The overall church jurisdiction in Macedonian Peninsula passed then under the conspirative Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople/Istanbul. But, the Macedonian

³⁷ *Exarchate* - an extraterritorial church, in exile.

Apostolic Church, even if illegally spoiled (as the Turkish Sultan had no ecclesiastic authority whatsoever over the autocephalous church institutions) from the administrative jurisdiction over its eparchies - didn't perish. It continued to perform the holy apostolic teachings among its Macedonian flock without hesitation. The difficult economic situation in that moment compelled the Ohrid archbishops and their bishops to turn to Europe and from there to seek financial assistance. This harsh situation of the Macedonian people, as well as the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, continued until the end of 18th century.

Thenafter the Turkish-created/abolished Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrad was officially proclaimed independent and even became autocephalous (once more...) in 1879, one year after the *ex-patria* recognition by the Great Powers of Serbia as an independent state. Its non-canonical church was then known as the Metropolitanate of Belgrad. Thus, the small-change imperialistic policies of the emerging western powers and declining Ottoman empire reflected in the creation of different various political and non-canonical new churches in the Macedonian Peninsula. And, at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century two separate non-canonical Serbian Churches still existed – the Austro-Hungarian homemade Serbian Church of Sremski Karlovci within the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Turkish-made, then abolished, and then again remade Archiepiscopacy of Belgrade in the then Pashaluk³⁸ of Serbia.

³⁸ *Pashaluk* - 'principality' in plain Turkish.



Left: the birth of modern Serbia

Ottoman rule in the consciousness of the Macedonian people is observed as Martyrs period. Many Christians who refused to convert to Islam were brutally tortured and killed. Church of that period remembers many martyrs and saints: St. Zlata Meglenska, St. Agatangel Bitolski, St. Spas Radoviški, St. George Kratovski, etc. who laid their lives for Christianity. The fact is that Islam in this period was utterly spread by the sword and fire, and indeed it's God's miracle, but also the painful proof of devoted fidelity of the Macedonian people, how Macedonia still remained predominantly Christian country. Then, an increased physical torture and Turkish fanaticism has reached its climax. Due to the great terror against unprotected population desperate Islamization of many villages in Veles, Kičevo and Meglensko occurred.

This and other circumstances led the Macedonian population to a ulterior depletion, which also reflected on the financial and general situation of the Macedonian Archdiocese. After the illegal administrative abolition of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy the Ecumenical Patriarchate has initially removed the ecclesiastic

inherencies from the indigenous Macedonian bishops, which were replaced by foreign ‘*Phanariot*’³⁹ bishops from Istanbul, who were not accepted by the local people, as they didn’t spoke the language of the flock they’ve been given. First they banned the Macedonic liturgy and worship in Macedonian cities where they’ve been appointed. Further, they used their authority only to collect the church taxes, which were then used in political and other purposes. Generally these foreign bishops came to Macedonia with one single aim: to get rich and then return to their mother diocese and enjoy. They thought of themselves as “humiliated and punished” if appointed to manage people who speak Macedonic languages.

The whole ecclesiastic structure was in serious danger. This caused the Macedonian believers justified rebellion and strong protests. They openly repudiated the abusive agents of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and organized themselves in local “Church Comities” across Macedonia, in order to preserve Macedonian Apostolic Church, its millennial traditions and institutions. Thus, the Macedonian people under guide of priests, elected directly by the people, saved their very own Macedonian Apostolic Church from total disaster. Holy artifacts and books in Old Church Macedonic were hidden and preserved for future generations by common people within their families proper. Deacons and priests continued the holy service in Macedonic language and rite, professing the original Apostolic teachings just like during the epoch of Bogomils few centuries ago. They transcribed, lectured, and transmitted the Holy Macedonic Gospels across Macedonian Peninsula despite all the forms of persecution used by the church institutions and *Phanariotes* of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.

One wonderful example of the incessant ecclesiastic struggle and painstaking holy work of the Macedonian Apostolic Church preachers, in circumstances of illegality, is the Konikovo Gospel manuscript.⁴⁰ Written somewhere at the end of 18th century, and found by the Finnish historian and philologist Mika Hakkarainen in the Library of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria in 2003, the Konikovo Gospel represents an extraordinary example as one of the many holy literacy monuments of Macedonic rite, and exceptional testimony of the enormous spiritual dedication and sacrifice of the Macedonian Apostolic Church priests, deacons and religious followers. It is a hand-written manuscript in vernacular Macedonian (not the formal Church Macedonic language), in what is known as Macedonic dialect of Lower Vardar (Enidže Vardarsko). Written by an unknown author and grammatically redacted by the hieromonk Pavel (i.e. deacon Paul) Božigropski, a protosingel of the Holy Sepulchre church in the village of Konikovo (Voden eparchy), Aegean Macedonia. It is also the oldest known Sunday Gospel in Modern Macedonian.⁴¹ Nevertheless, it confirms the uninterrupted millennial continuity and constant lineage of the apostolic teachings and traditions of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - through Macedonian language and liturgy, from the times of Apostle Paul till today. And, it is a firm reminder of the Macedonian people unabated and truly devoted belief in the word of god, a faithfully committed credo that resisted all the foreign invasions, occupations, assimilations, religious and political divisions. Despite the incredibly hard times and incessant oppression, Macedonian priests and monks preserved their

³⁹ *Phanar* - a rich suburb in Istanbul, famous for the gas-lanterns (i.e. *Phener* in plain Turkish)

⁴⁰ “The Road to Konikovo” by Jouko Lindstedt (University of Helsinki).

⁴¹ It is a clear continuation of Bible translations into Macedonian: nine centuries before it Cyril and Methodius used the living vernacular Macedonic dialect of the Solun region in their translations in the 9th century; thereafter came a hiatus of almost a millennium, during which the Bible texts did not directly reflect the spoken language of the Macedonian peoples, as the Macedonic Church rite became highly ceremonial; and then again turned back the vernacular Macedonic manuscripts of the 18/19th centuries. However, whenever the ‘Modern’ period of the Macedonian language began, it certainly was some time in that past millennium.

apostolic church from disappearance, through self-organized popular preachings, and written and verbal transmission of the millennial church traditions.



Above: **a detail from ikon in the church of St. George, Kurbinovo. 12th century**

The next big blow came from Istanbul again. There, in 1870 the Turkish Sultan created another non-canonical political “ecclesiastic” institution, the Bulgar Exarchate... Thus, yet another fraudulent church that wasn’t created by some dedicated community or group of believers, nor any ecclesiastic or really justified reason other than the political one. This evergrowing alienation and desperately intricate situation of these newly forged ecclesiastic fractions was vividly described by the Macedonian archimandrite Teodosiy Gologanov, who in his letter of 21 June 1891 writes:

“We Macedonians have no such trouble from the Turks, long live the sultan, as from the Greex, Bulgars and Serbs, who like vultures on the carcass attack this our suffered country and want to split it up ... Bulgar Exarchate with its dirty corruption and philistine activities here in Macedonia actually carried most miserable task, trying to take away the sacred identity of Macedonian people and replacing it with

another, depriving them from the native language and replacing it with something else, robs all national marks and replaces them with those of other people ... Turks take properties and leave the common people, not reaching for their spirit. They are destroying the body, but they respect our soul. And the Exarchate kills our world in this way, continuously ... We clerics of Macedonian origin need to come together and to raise our people to wake up, to reject foreigners administrations, to dispel Patriarchate and Exarchate, and unite spiritually in the bosom of our church, of our real mother church. It is time to stop division of the same people just because one is assimilated by the Patriarchate, other by the Exarchate, and the third prays to Muhammad..."

Given the close connection between the Orthodox churches with new local nationalisms (Bulgar, Serb and Greek in this case) Metropolitan Teodosiy knew that no Patriarchate nor Exarchate will agree to restore the apostolic inherencies of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy as a center of the original Macedonian Apostolic Church. Therefore, like Tsar Samoil some nine centuries before him, in 1891 Metropolitan Theodosius tried to negotiate with the papal nuncio in Istanbul (Constantinople) the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church over eventual restoration of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Then he set the following six conditions:

1. To renew the ancient Ohrid Archiepiscopacy, which will be in canonical unity with the Roman Catholic Church, with immediate blessing of the Holy Father the Pope.
2. The head of the restored Ohrid Archiepiscopacy would be he as autocephalous head of the church.
3. Other people from the high clergy (bishops, deacons and priests) to be born Macedonians and appointed by the archbishop, and bishops can only be confirmed by your holiness.
4. The boundaries of the Archiepiscopacy to coincide with the borders of Macedonia, and as division of the dioceses to keep current.
5. Old Uniats from Kukushko-Poljanska and Strumitsa eparchies to separate from jurisdiction of the Uniat Archbishop of Constantinople, N. B. Nile Izvorov, and to join as eparchies towards the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy.
6. Catholic missionaries, with the exception of the current present in educational and charitable institutions in Macedonia, not to bring new, and those who are already here not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Archdiocese.

On 4 December 1891 the same Theodosiy wrote to Pope Leo XIII, in which he asks the catholic holy father in his own and on behalf of all Orthodox congregations in Macedonia *"to receive us under his wing of the Roman Catholic Church after renewal of the ancient Ohrid Archbishopric, illegally abolished by Sultan Mustafa III in 1767."* In late November 1891 even negotiations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Metropolitan Theodosiy began. Actually, the Constantinople/Istanbul Patriarchate in ongoing negotiations with Theodosiy clearly stated that it would accept the Macedonian Metropolitan, but only under its jurisdiction, and accepted none of his conditions, i.e. the restoration of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. This showed that the only reason why the Ecumenical Patriarchate entered in "negotiations" with the Macedonian Metropolitan Theodosiy was its desire to somehow recover the eparchies in Macedonia lost with the non-canonical creation of the Bulgar Exarchate in Istanbul.

Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy restoration in modern times

The autocephalous Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy after decades passed in obscurity was officially restored in 1859, by nomination of Partenie Zografski (1820-1876) for Kukush-Poljanski episcopate. This was the first triumph of the renewed indigenous Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy in modern times. After 98 years in illegality, the autochthonous apostolic Christianity in Macedonia started gradually to reemerge under the decades-long politically imposed harsh reality. Its dioceses were divided between several jurisdictions of the new non-canonical politically created neighboring Orthodox Churches. The struggle for restoring of its apostolic authority and ecclesiastic jurisdiction became particularly fierce at the closing of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. After the Balkan and the World War I the non-canonical Bulgar Exarchate in Vardar Macedonia was abolished, and Macedonian Apostolic Church was forcibly subjected to the United Orthodox Church in the new Kingdom of Serbs, Hrvats (Lat. *Croats*) and Slovenes (Kingdom of SHS). During the WW2 Bulgar occupation of Macedonia (1941-1945), the church in Macedonia was again submitted under the administration of the then unrecognized Bulgar Orthodox Church of the fascist regime in Sofia. Finally, conditions for official restoration of the inherited autocephaly and whole independence of the Macedonian Apostolic Church – Ohrid Archiepiscopacy were created during the World War II (1941-1945). Macedonia freed itself, and started the restoration of its institutions in modern times. Right before the end of the war, in 1944, in the village of Gorno Vranovtsi, an Initiative Board for Organization of the Macedonian Apostolic Church was formed. In March of 1945, in Skopje, a Resolution to restore the Archdiocese of Ohrid as Macedonian Orthodox Church was made at the First Clergy and Laity Assembly. This decision was submitted to the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, since before World War II several dioceses in Macedonia were under the United Orthodox Church of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (in the then Kingdom of S.H.S.), which later diminished only as Serbian Orthodox Church. The Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church first didn't accept this decision of the Macedonian Church, which resulted in the following actions of the Initiative Board: instead of as an autocephalous, the Board insisted on the Church being recognized as autonomous. This request was also rejected.

In 1958, the Second Clergy and Laity Assembly was held in Ohrid and the proposal for restoration of the Ohrid Archdiocese of St. Clement as a Macedonian Orthodox Church was accepted, and Dositey was appointed the first archbishop of the officially restored Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. The Holy Synod of the non-canonical Serbian Orthodox Church then agreed with the decisions of the Macedonian Clergy and Laity Assembly in the resolution AS. № 47/1959 and 6/1959, minutes 57 of June 17/4/1959. As a sign of agreement, a solemn Liturgy was concelebrated with the Serbian patriarch German, on July 19, 1959, in the Episcopal Skopje, in the church of St. Menas. At the same time, Clement was ordained the episcopate of Prespa and Bitola. This meant that the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church finally and officially returned the inherent autonomy to her mother church, i.e. the Macedonian Apostolic Church, which nevertheless remained in canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church. Few days later, in the church of St. Nicholas in Štip, H.E. Naum was ordained the episcopate of the diocese of Zletovo and Strumitsa. The Holy Synod of the Macedonian Apostolic Church was established together with other administrative bodies in the Archdiocese and the dioceses in conformity with the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Once powerful Macedonian Archdiocese and Patriarchate, with 32 episcopacies under its jurisdiction, the Macedonian Apostolic

Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy in 1959 finally managed to restore its inherited authority over only 4 (four) of its former eparchies. Today it has eight eparchies under its jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, in May, 1962, accompanied by the patriarch German and other representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Russian Patriarch Alexis of Moscow visited the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Among them were the metropolitan Nikodim, bishop Pimen and other dignitaries of the Russian Orthodox Church (yet another daughter-church of the Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy). Macedonian Apostolic Church thus found in very odd position - to be recognized by the very own eparchies, which Ohrid Archiepiscopacy itself helped and raised into oblivion centuries ago. On the feast of Saints Methodius and Cyril, in the church of the Holy Mother of God Kamenska, in Ohrid, Patriarch Alexis of Moscow, Patriarch German and the Macedonian Metropolitan Dositey concelebrated Holy Liturgy. It was the first Holy Liturgy to be concelebrated by the head of the modern fully restored Macedonian Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy with heads of other autocephalous Orthodox Churches. Thus, the solemn re-recognition and re-inauguration of the new archbishop of the Macedonian Apostolic Church in the 20th century was performed in the most canonical and legal way, as prescribed by the church canons and holy laws.



Above: **Moscow Patriarch Alexis, Serbian Metropolitan German and the Macedonian Archbishop Dositey concelebrate Holy Liturgy in 1962**

Due to the continuous institutional conflicts and misunderstandings with neighboring newly-created national churches, the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Apostolic Church – Ohrid Archiepiscopacy summoned the Third Clergy and Laity Assembly on July 17, 1967, in Ohrid. At the formal session in the Ohrid church of St. Clement, the Holy Synod reconfirmed the Macedonian Apostolic Church as

Autocephalous once again. The act of proclamation was made by the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Apostolic Church during the Holy Liturgy celebrated in the church of St. Clement of Ohrid on July 19, 1967, or exactly on the second centennial after it had been non-canonically banned by the Ottoman authorities.

Today the jurisdiction of the Macedonian Apostolic Church spreads not only throughout Macedonia, but also in the church communities abroad. According to Article 17 from the Proclamation of Autocephaly, the Macedonian Orthodox Church as an administrative part of the One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic Church is to observe the Holy Scriptures and the Holy tradition, the Canons of the Apostles and the decrees of the ecumenical councils, and is to follow them and the Constitution of the Macedonian Apostolic Church. Praying humbly for the other ones, the Macedonian Apostolic Church will always rely on the prayers, blessings and assistance of its younger sibling holy local Orthodox Churches.

The Symbols of Macedonian Autocephalous Apostolic Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy

The cross (+) was heraldic symbol of the ancient Macedonian state from immemorial times, and in the 4th century BCE Alexander III of Macedon was wearing it on the shoulders of his Macedonian royal uniform.



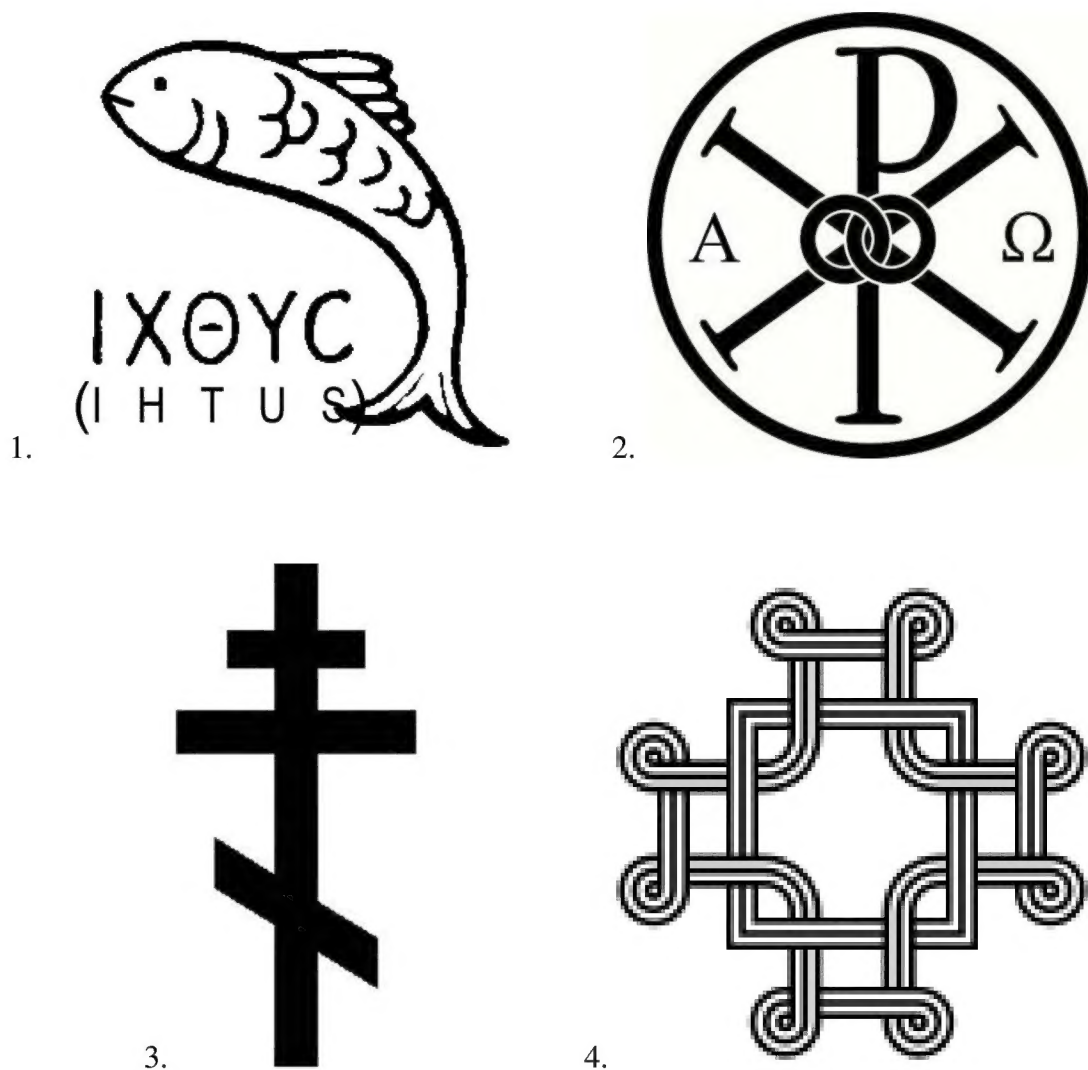
Above: **Ancient Macedonian coins from 6th and 5th century BCE**

The horizontal line “—” in Old Macedonian syllabic symbolized today’s letter 'A' - first, the first, or the primordial Great Supreme Mother-Goddess of Upper Macedonia (today Republic of Macedonia) – meaning 'She-First' (—); and the vertical line “|” represented the Supreme Father-God of Lower (Aegean) Macedonia, or 'He-First' (|).



Above: **3rd century seal representing the Macedonic Orpheus Bakikos (i.e. *Bachus*) crucified and on seventh heaven (symbolized by 7 crosses)**

Centuries later the Macedonian Cross was adopted as the personal coat of arms by Konstantin (Anglicized: *Constantine*) I the Great, himself Macedonian too, and after that was finally adopted by Christians in the 7th century. And, not until the pontificate of Agathon (AD 608) was Christ represented as a man on a cross. During the reign of Constantine Pogonatus, by the Sixth Synod of Constantinople (Canon 82) it was ordained that instead of the ancient symbols (which had been the fish, pigeon, palm tree, etc.) the figure of a man nailed to a cross should be represented. All this was confirmed by pope Adrian I.



Above: Christian symbols throughout the ages (from top left to bottom right): 1. the very first Christian symbol - the fish of Jesus (Ihtus); 2. the Constantine Ro Labarum; 3. the Old Macedonic universal Orthodox cross; 4. the contemporary cross of the apostolic Macedonian Rightglorious Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy originating in XII century



Above: **typical Macedonic Orthodox bishop staff**

Next page: **MPC-OA official heraldic emblem**



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